

THE LONDON READER

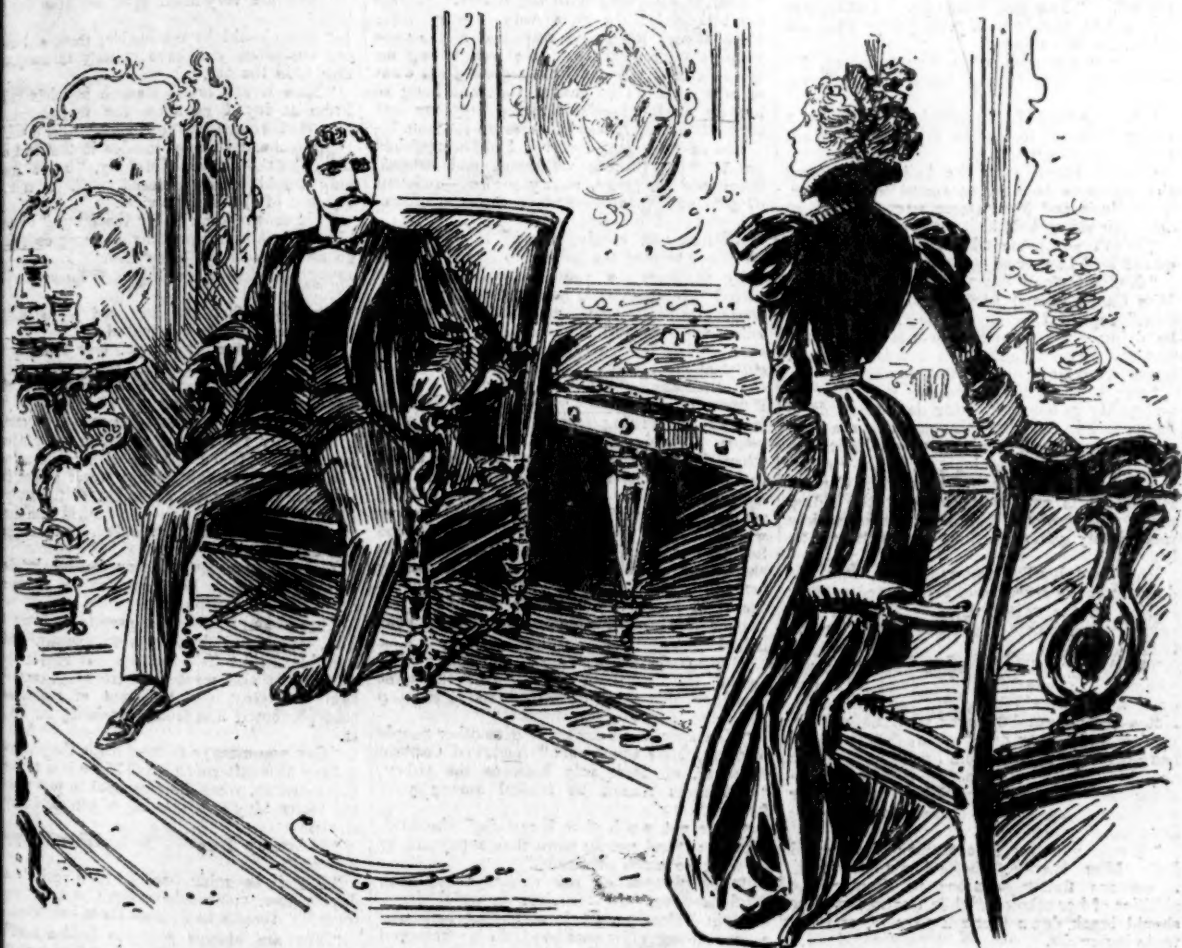
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"BUT FOR YOUR SORDID CONDUCT . . . THE DIAMONDS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN STOLEN!" FLASHED ELINOR.

ONE THOUSAND POUNDS REWARD

NOVELETTE.
(CONCLUDED.)

CHAPTER VIII.

A FINE day following after the many rainy ones caused even the grumblers and weather-prophets to rejoice.

"What shall we do, and where shall we go?" cried Susie Heath, who was helping Mrs. Dacre to arrange fresh flowers in the drawing-room vases. "Decide quickly, good people, or we shall lose the best part of the day."

"I want to go down to the village," said Elinor. "I have some books to distribute,

and two or three old folks to visit. When staying at Belmont I feel as if I must needs take up my old position of lay curate, and the Vicar is kind enough not to interfere or object."

"I daresay he would be glad to engage you at a fixed stipend," laughed Susie. "But I hope you'll never marry a clergyman, Nellie. Some clergymen's wives are angelic women, while others are not at all nice. They shine with reflected authority, they think themselves privileged to rebuke and exhort; in fact, they are really priests in petticoats."

"May I go with you to help distribute the tracts, Miss Campbell?" asked Lord Chippendale.

"Oh, they're not tracts," said Elinor, "only cheap editions of Scott, Dickens, and Carlyle. I am not very fond of tract literature myself, and the works of our great authors contain the noblest sermons ever preached outside a

pulpit. Fancy having all the world for your congregation!"

"Persons who make a point of giving away tracts should use a little more discrimination if they wish to effect any good," observed Lady Chippendale, complacently. "I once had a tract handed to me by an elderly female in a poke bonnet, and when I opened it the first words that met my eyes were, 'Stop! Drunkard! Abandon the Glass!'"

A general laugh followed this narrative.

"She might have given it to a navy or a sailor," continued her ladyship. "In that case it would not have missed its purpose so utterly."

"It is the looking-glass, not the drinking-glass, that possesses fatal attractions for you, Maria," said her husband, sarcastically. They had long since resumed the sparring in which they both delighted.

"You are not likely to fall into the same

error," replied Lady Chippendale, sharply. "I wonder people with liver complaint ever venture to behold their reflection in the glass."

This was a direct allusion to Lord Chippendale's yellow complexion and lack of personal attractions. Susie Heath interposed between the belligerent parties to prevent any more matrimonial compliments from being exchanged.

"We have not settled what to do with ourselves yet," she remarked. "Can't you advise us, Lord Chippendale? I should like a breezy gallop across the common and round by the high road home."

"Very good exercise for young people," he replied. "You had better go. I shall join the sedate members of the party who are bound for the village."

"If you can give me a mount, Dacre, I'll accompany Miss Heath," said Bertie Cavendish.

"And so will I. Splendid morning for a gallop," chimed in his late friend and present rival, Ned Lawrence.

Clifford Dacre rang the bell and ordered the horses to be brought round to the door, while Susie and Mrs. Dacre went upstairs to don their riding habits.

"Won't you come with us, Falconer?" inquired Ned Lawrence.

"No, I'll stroll down to the village with Miss Campbell and Lord and Lady Chippendale," replied Captain Falconer. "We shall be doing good to our fellow-creatures, while you mad-brained individuals are risking your necks in taking it out of the horses."

Susie soon returned, looking very piquant and pretty in her well-fitting dark-blue riding-habit, and little hard-felt hat, with a scarlet wing, under which her wavy dark hair was twisted in a tight, shining coil.

She put her lip when she heard that Captain Falconer was not to accompany the riding party. His profound indifference to her society was terribly galling to the proud, wilful, little beauty.

They had hardly cantered away from the door when the others who had elected to walk started for the village, Captain Falconer carrying the books that Elinor had bought for distribution.

Their first call was made at the school, where their unexpected appearance caused quite a sensation among the rustic scholars. Not a girl present but knew what Lady Chippendale and Elinor had "got on" before they had been in the schoolroom five minutes, while the boys took admiring notice of Captain Falconer and Lord Chippendale, "the yaller gentleman," as they ventured to term the latter among themselves.

"Would you like to examine them?" said little Miss Brooke, the schoolmistress, in a nervous flutter, anxious to display the abilities of her scholars, while fearful lest they should break down through shyness, and fail to do her credit.

Elinor declined the offer, but Captain Falconer accepted it. He began well, only he failed to keep in the right path, sliding off presently into sheer nonsense, and asking the most ridiculous questions with the gravest of faces.

Miss Brooke was puzzled, the youngsters were in ecstasies, hailing each gigantic blunder the Captain made with a shout of delight. They would fain have had him as their school inspector; examination day in that case would have lost all its terrors for them.

"We had better go," said Elinor, remonstratingly. "You are demoralising the school, Captain Falconer. Miss Brooke will never be able to restore order."

The Captain pulled out his watch.

"You'll all be let out in ten minutes," he remarked, to the attentive pupils, "and I'll stand treat at the sweet-shop. You won't forget to look for me there?"

It was too much. Discipline was thrown to the winds, and they gave him three cheers. The books were then distributed, and the

old lady who kept the sweet-shop did a brisk trade when the children came flocking out of school.

"It brings the sticky joys of childhood back to one's memory!" said Lord Chippendale, as the "bull's-eyes" and hardbake disappeared in large quantities.

"Yes," rejoined the soldier, with a smile. "They don't look very tempting to us now; and yet, in one way or another, we are always striving after the sweets of life."

"Have we any more visits to make, Miss Campbell?" inquired Lady Chippendale.

"Only one," said Elinor. "It is to a retired butlerman, quite an aristocratic individual as compared with the others. Please don't laugh! He is a very worthy man. Papa always liked and respected him as the people's churchwarden. He was telling me the other day how much he regretted his want of education. That makes the time hang so heavily on his hands. I have kept my last copy of 'Bleak House' in reserve for him."

The ex-butterman received his distinguished guests with profuse welcomes, and ushered them into the large, showy parlour—redolent of glue and varnish—that formed the crowning glory of his life.

"Thank you kindly, miss!" he exclaimed, as Elinor handed the volume to him. "I shall vally it more as coming from you. Look there!" he continued, pointing with a triumphant chuckle to some brand-new bookshelves, laden with richly-bound books, hanging just over his head; "I've got over that little difficulty about learning I was telling you about the other day. They're all on them shelves, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and the rest of the writing fellows, as neat as nippence. Who'd puzzle their brains with study when, for a few pounds, they can buy up all the literary wisdom in the world? The raw material was wanted when the finished article's so ready to hand. I brought 'em up wholesale, and whichever I feel in the mood for, ancient or modern, down he comes off the shelf, to unfold all his wit and wisdom for my benefit. Money, my dear young lady, money's the right thing for me, after all! Once get that, and the rest is as easy as kiss your hand!"

Elinor could not but coincide in the truthfulness of this assertion. What, save the want of money, she thought, sadly, tended to keep her apart from Guy?

"You are always trying to give other people pleasure, Miss Campbell!" remarked Captain Falconer, on their way back to the Abbey. "Selfishness cannot be ranked among your failings."

"It is not much that I can do," she said, humbly; "and people more than repay me by showing so much gratitude."

As he glanced at the sweet, thoughtful, studious face, the slender, graceful form, Captain Falconer told himself that here was a rare flower of womanhood, to be gathered and worn upon the breast of some fortunate man.

He had no wish to make the attempt on his own account. He had already selected his rosette in the garden of girls, and pricked his fingers terribly in the effort to gain possession of it.

"Are you and Miss Heath on intimate terms with each other?" he inquired, carelessly, when Lord and Lady Chippendale were well on ahead.

"Yes," she replied, not a little amused at the prospect of a second confidential communication. First Susie, then the Captain. What could it all mean?

"Have you any influence over her?"

"A little, perhaps—not much. Why do you ask?"

"It seems such a pity that she should go on flirting with those young cubs!" said the Captain, angrily. "They completely monopolise her. Perhaps she is incapable of better things, though!"

"Indeed, she is not!" cried Elinor. "Susie is one of the best and dearest girls in the

world, only she is a little spoiled, and sometimes she takes a perverse delight in presenting the worst side of her character for inspection. Why, when her father lost nearly all his money, through the failure of a bank, Susie was the prop and stay of the entire family! She developed endless resources, looking after the home, and earning money by teaching as well."

"You must admit that she is fond of flirting."

"That is not altogether her fault," returned Elinor, warmly. "If men refused to be flirted with there would soon be an end to flirting altogether."

"You are very hard upon us, Miss Campbell."

"You should be reasonable, then, and not cry out when you have wilfully thrust your fingers in the fire."

"Miss Heath has a staunch friend in you. From to-day I abandon the long-cherished idea that women like to run each other down."

"Some women may indulge in that sort of thing," said Elinor, scornfully, "but a true lady would hardly descend to it. It is the meanest of all feminine vices."

"I'll frown upon it for the future," he replied, meekly, suppressing a strong desire to go on depreciating Susie Heath, in order to enjoy the pleasure of hearing Elinor defend her.

The little flirt had her good points, then, which could not be overlooked.

Guy Singleton had stayed only a few days in town, greatly to Elinor's relief. His return had lifted a great weight of anxiety from her mind.

Although looking harassed and ill at ease, his manner no longer appeared singular or alarming. When she questioned him as to the meaning of the strange words spoken in the conservatory on the night of the fancy-dress ball, and the agitation he had then displayed, he only laughed, and strove to change the subject.

He was very loving, very devoted, but he refused to discuss his private affairs, or enter into any explanation.

That some great trouble perpetually haunted him, rendering him nervous, uneasy, and irritable, Elinor felt certain. It grieved her to think of this mysterious trouble in connection with Guy, and the want of confidence that prevented him from acquainting her with it.

"Can you manage to meet me in the picture-gallery this afternoon, Nell?" he said to her one morning, when they chanced to pass upon the stairs, Guy still refusing to join the family circle.

"I dare say I can. Susie will cover my retreat."

"I shall be going back to town again in a day or two, and we have spent so little time together, thanks to Clifford Dacre's rudeness."

"You are always going to London now," she said, anxiously. "You must have a great deal of business to transact, Guy. I hope it is not connected with racing matters."

"No; I have given the turf up as a dead failure. Other schemes having fallen through, I expect it will end in my going to Canada by myself, while I've money enough to take me there. You have promised to wait a year for me, Nell, under any circumstances."

"Am I likely to forget my promise, that you remind me of it?" she asked, reproachfully.

"I suppose not, but ill-luck has made me horribly mistrustful," he replied; "and your love is all I have left to console me."

Four o'clock had struck before Elinor could get away to keep her appointment with Guy in the long oak-panelled picture-gallery.

The waning light fell upon the portraits of dead and gone Belmonts. Fair women and brave men smiled or frowned from their heavy, gilded frames, while suits of armour, ranged at regular intervals along the gallery, looked grim and formidable, as if each might contain a veritable crusader.



Guy was waiting for her, pacing up and down the gallery with restless footsteps. "I began to think you were not coming," he said, impatiently.

"I could not make my escape from the drawing-room any sooner," she replied, gently. "There were callers. Don't be angry with me now that I am here, Guy."

"I am not angry, only miserable," said Guy, moodily. "This place is enough to give one the blues, even if one hadn't got them already."

They stood by one of the arched windows talking long and earnestly, while the light died slowly away, leaving them in almost total darkness.

Guy alluded vaguely to a great loss that he had sustained, and which rendered it necessary for him to go to Canada. Much as she dreaded the separation Elinor could hardly blame him to remain at home in idleness, wasting the best years of his life.

She entered with sorrowful interest into the various details connected with his approaching voyage.

"You will not start until next month, and—"

A dull, muffled clang, a faint rattle of armour, caused her to break off suddenly in her sentence, and cling to Guy's arm.

"What was it?" she asked, in a frightened whisper. "You heard the noise?"

"Yes; it was only a rat or a mouse behind the armour," he said, reassuringly. "This is their happy hunting-ground. This abbey is not fortunate enough to possess a ghost."

They had only left the gallery a few minutes when Vickers, the detective, emerged from behind one of the suits of armour, and stole noiselessly away.

CHAPTER IX.

One by one the guests departed, until Susie Heath and Elinor alone remained to keep Mrs. Dacre company. Clifford Dacre, preferring the society of his stud-groom, and spending most of his time in the stables, seldom joined them, his absence being little noticed or regretted, even by his wife.

Susie Heath and Captain Falconer had maintained their belligerent attitude to the last.

"There goes another of your victims, Miss Heath," he remarked, sarcastically, as he stood by the drawing-room window waiting for the dog-cart to be brought round, and watching the Rev. Glanda Grenville's curate disappear down the avenue. "He is a very good young man, but you have disabused him of his elaborate notions, made a convert of him, and then abandoned him remorselessly. Now he lites between two conditions. He doesn't want to remain bachelor, and he can't become Benedict."

Susie flashed an angry look at her tormentor.

"You at least have not been victimised," she replied, quickly.

"Since I am such a fatal lure you ought to congratulate yourself upon your escape."

"Perhaps I do," was the provoking reply; "but I can't help pitying that young curate. If he had not fallen in with you, and lost his heart to no purpose, he might have met with some nice girl eventually, and settled down to a comfortable commonplace existence."

This indirect mode of implying that Susie was not a nice girl proved too much for her endurance.

"You are very compassionate," she observed, her quick temper carrying her beyond the limits of civil warfare, "and pity is a cheap virtue. The best and noblest woman of your acquaintance, to whom you alluded the other day, does her utmost, I suppose, to keep you out of danger, and warn you against losing your heart in a similar manner, always supposing you to possess one."

"I alluded to my mother, and she is dead," said Captain Falconer, quietly.

Susie felt both relieved and remorseful.

"I am sorry I made that remark," she rejoined, penitently. "I could not tell that it was from your mother you gained your idea of what a woman should be."

She had never spoken so gently and frankly to him before; and Captain Falconer, as he drove away from the Abbey, detected himself in the act of wishing that her changed bearing had set in a little earlier.

Guy Singleton had gone back to town on the day after his stolen interview in the picture-gallery with Elinor. She supposed him to be engaged in preparing his outfit for Canada, and the thought of his approaching departure, and the uncertainties connected with his return, made her feel dull and unhappy.

"Shall we drive into Bromley this afternoon?" said Mrs. Dacre, as they sat at luncheon. "I have some shopping to do, and we can call at Madame Camplin's to see how she is getting on with the dresses."

Both girls expressed their willingness to accompany her.

"I'll go with you," said Clifford Dacre, who was struggling wildly with a fowl. Like most wretched carvers, he always refused to let the butler undertake that important duty. "I've promised to meet Conway and Trevor at the Rose for a game of billiards. You can drop me there on your way to the shops."

The afternoon turned out to be fine, and Clifford Dacre was in a very gracious mood. He kept the others laughing at his bad jokes and atrocious puns till they reached Bromley. Having set him down at the one hotel of any importance that Bromley could boast of, Mrs. Dacre and her visitors commenced the serious business of shopping.

The advent of the Abbey people always occasioned a certain amount of excitement throughout the little town. Passers-by looked after the luxuriously-appointed carriage as it rolled smoothly along, the sleek, glossy coats of the magnificent bays shining in the mellow afternoon sunlight, while shopkeepers hurried bareheaded to the doorway to receive Mrs. Dacre's liberal orders.

She was fond of patronising the local tradesmen, and she had but few dealings with co-operative stores. On this account Bromley people thought highly of her, and paid her every attention.

There were so many places to call at, such a number of things to inspect and collect from, that the carriage did not draw up in front of Madame Camplin's door until dusk was setting in.

Madame, a thin, wiry, well-dressed Frenchwoman, who spoke as much with her arms and hands as with her tongue, received her best customer with a great show of welcome. The dresses were almost completed; they were simply ravissante. Would the ladies walk upstairs to behold them? She had other orders in hand, which they would doubtless like to see.

One woman dearly likes to criticise the unfinished finery destined for another. Mrs. Dacre, Susie, and Elinor made their way to the show-room, and spent a pleasant hour in reviewing the various dresses brought forward for their inspection.

Elinor, who cared less for this amusement than her companions, presently remembered a commission that she had promised to execute for the doctor's wife.

"I had nearly forgotten Mrs. Darcy's crewels," she exclaimed. "I will run round to the shop and match them. By that time you will be ready to start."

"Very well, dear; don't be long gone," said Mrs. Dacre, and Elinor ran downstairs, and made her way on foot to the fancy repository, some two or three streets off.

It took the shopwoman a considerable time to match the various crewel shades required. When Elinor left the shop she turned up a side street that formed a short cut to the one in which Madame Camplin's establishment was situated, carrying the little package in her hand.

"They will all be waiting for me," she thought, as she hurried quickly along.

The narrow, picturesque street through which she was passing formed part of Old Bromley. The fourth-rate shops that lined it on either side knew nothing of plate-glass and modern frontage. Carved gables, projecting upper-stories, and many-paned windows were its distinguishing features.

Elinor raised her head suddenly as a tall man came down the almost deserted street towards her, impressing her as he drew nigh with an odd sense of familiarity and previous acquaintance.

The light from a neighbouring gas-lamp fell full upon his face in passing her. Their eyes met, and a flash of startled recognition, an involuntary tremor, instantly suppressed, on the part of the man tended to prove his identity.

Elinor went on, her heart beating violently, her whole frame aglow with intense excitement.

It was the man she had met in the corridor!

His long beard had vanished, and he was differently dressed; but the dark hair, the bushy eyebrows, the stoop, the conscious mark of recognition of meeting her, could not be mistaken.

Elinor passed, and looked back after the unknown.

Without once turning his head to the right or left he entered the low-browed doorway of a house belonging to Solomon Levi, a Jew, who kept an old curiosity shop, and had more than once been suspected of receiving stolen goods.

With her mind in a perfect whirl, Elinor sped quickly on. She had almost reached Madame Camplin's establishment when she beheld Vickers, the detective, standing on the pavement, looking about him with a baffled, disappointed air.

She went up to him gladly.

"Vickers, I have just seen the man who is suspected of taking the diamonds," she began, breathlessly. "I watched him enter a shop in Queen Street. I can point it out to you."

Vickers, in his delight, gave vent to a strong ejaculation, and then begged pardon.

"I've been to London after him, miss," he explained, "and then followed him down here again. I caught sight of my bird at the station, but he managed to give me the slip; and I was just on the look-out for him. You're sure you can identify him?"

"Quite sure."

"And yet if you only knew," said the detective. "From what I've heard you might prefer to keep out of the job. Mr. Dacre—"

"We were about to send the town-crier after you, Miss Campbell," said Clifford Dacre, coming up at that moment. "Maggie fancied that you had been spirited away."

In a few words the detective explained the situation to him.

"Capital!" he cried, gleefully. "You have run the fox to earth this time, and no mistake. Miss Campbell, you will be kind enough to accompany us? You will only be required to identify the fellow when once we have secured him."

The trio went at a swift pace towards Queen Street, Vickers indulging in no more vague allusions. Elinor was wanted as a witness, and sentiment, when a successful case was in point, had, in American parlance, to take a back seat.

"This is the shop I saw him enter," said Elinor, coming to a full stop outside Solomon Levi's window, crowded with old china, doubtful paintings, and silver jewellery.

The detective and a policeman he had beckoned to on the way crept softly into the shop, the door of which stood ajar, leaving Clifford Dacre and Elinor on the pavement outside.

The glass door of the inner room was screened by a red curtain, which did not come quite half-way down.

Peering under it, Vickers beheld the tall, dark man and Solomon Levi seated at a table, engaged in earnest conversation.

Then swiftly and noiselessly they entered the room, closing the door behind them.

Vickers presently emerged alone, and beckoned to the remaining members of the party.

"We've got him, sir," he remarked quietly to Clifford Dacre. "He offered no resistance to speak of. As I thought all along, he's disguised. Will you just step in and identify him, miss; there's nothing to be afraid of?"

Woman-like, now that he was in custody, Elinor shrank from confronting the guilty man, and pity for him became paramount in her mind.

"Must I go?" she said, tremulously.

"Of course, we can't do without you," replied Clifford Dacre, impatiently. "You've only got to say it's the same man."

Shrinking behind his burly form, Elinor entered the Jew's little parlour.

That son of Abraham, a small-eyed, silver-bearded old man, was emphatically asserting his own innocence with regard to the robbery, while the detected thief stood calm and unmoved by the side of the policeman.

As Elinor timidly raised her eyes to his face he regarded her with a look that was at once warning, beseeching, entreating, piteous.

Startled and unhappy, only a sense of honour prevented her from refusing to recognise him, and declaring that she had made a mistake in fancying him to be the man she had met in the corridor.

"Yes, I am certain it is the same man," she said, in an undertone. "His beard is gone, and he is differently dressed, but I know him to be the man I met in the corridor on the night of the fancy dress ball, when the robbery was committed."

A spasm of pain or fear shook the prisoner from head to foot as she spoke. The detective approached him, and whispered in his ear—

"The game's up, sir; I know you, if they don't, through all that disguise."

"In that case I will appear in my true character," said a strangely familiar voice, that took all save the detective and the Jew by surprise. "Clifford Dacre, I defy you; do your worst."

The wig, the eyebrows, the stoop, the stammer, disappeared as if by magic, and Guy Singleton stood before his captors with a desperate, reckless expression on his flushed, handsome face. He had played his last card and failed.

"Singleton, by Jove!" shouted Clifford. "Do you mean to say that he took my diamonds?"

"I do so," replied Vickers. "That felt hot first aroused my suspicions against him. I knew it couldn't have belonged to a common thief. Then I went to work to get proof. I found the maker's name and address that had been torn out of the hat in the fireplace in Mr. Singleton's bedroom, while a small gold stud, picked up on the floor of your lady's dressing-room, is missing from a set worn by him on the day of the robbery. Servants' gossip has helped me a good deal in sifting the affair to the bottom. Being a family matter, though, you may wish to have it hushed up."

"Not I," said Clifford Dacre, vindictively. "The utmost rigour of the law shall be brought to bear upon him. I give him in charge for abstracting nine thousand pounds' worth of diamonds from an iron safe at my residence, Belmont Abbey, on the twenty-second of December last. The Jew is doubtless an accomplice."

"I know nothing of the shentleman," said Solomon, in great alarm. "I haf never had any dealings with him. He has never been here before to-night. He wanted me to advance him money on personal security to go to Canada, and I at once refused."

Like one stupefied, Elinor stood by the door, gazing wildly at her lover, who strove to avoid meeting her eyes.

She saw the detective approach Guy and place a detaining hand on his shoulder; she

heard the old Jew vehemently denying any complicity in the theft of the jewels; she beheld the devilish malice, the exultant revenge, written on Clifford Dacre's broad, evil face; then, with a low moan, she fell fainting to the ground.

When she awoke she was in her own room at the Abbey, with Mrs. Dacre and Susie Heath bending over her.

"What have they done with him?" she asked, wildly, starting up in bed.

"He is in prison," rejoined Mrs. Dacre, with a sob. "They have searched the Jew's premises, but they found no trace of the diamonds, and Guy refuses to implicate him in the robbery. Do try to calm yourself, dear, and bear it patiently, or you will be ill."

Without a word Elinor threw herself back among the pillows, and prayed to die far more earnestly than some people have prayed to live.

CHAPTER X.

Guy Singleton's hearing before the magistrate came off in due course. It ended in his being committed for trial, bail not being allowed. Lord Chippendale and other gentlemen would willingly have come forward as his sureties had they been permitted to do so.

The offence, however, was a grave one, and no exception could be made in the culprit's favour, simply because he happened to be a gentleman.

Elinor had to be present at the hearing, her evidence being the most important. The mental agony she endured was so palpable that the magistrate kindly dismissed her as soon as possible.

She kept her eyes fixed upon the ground while relating what she knew of the jewel robbery, and answering the various questions put to her. Once only did she venture to raise them to Guy Singleton's face. Worn, haggard, changed, it yet expressed forgiveness and compassion, as if, in commiserating the wretchedness of her position, he had lost sight of his own.

Clifford Dacre went about with a defiant air, as if challenging other people's right to criticise his conduct in thus prosecuting his own cousin. He hated Guy, and it afforded him a great deal of malicious satisfaction to think how low the young fellow had fallen. He talked in a bombastic manner of abstract justice, and the entire absence of personal animus that distinguished him in thus allowing the law to take its own course.

Other people, though, were keen enough to see through this flimsy pretence, and it did not add to his popularity throughout the county. The least he could have done, all declared, was to have put an end to the prosecution, had the whole affair hushed up, and given Guy something to go abroad with.

Considering that he had stepped into the inheritance his cousin had been brought up to regard as his own, it would not have been such an overwhelming concession.

But Clifford Dacre had no desire to play such a magnanimous and forgiving part towards poor Guy. The latter was down, and he wished to keep him there, veiling his dislike and malice meanwhile, and declaring the attitude he had assumed towards Guy to be the result of high principle. Most men hate humbug, although they avail themselves of it more or less, and Clifford Dacre's heartless policy, with its leaven of hypocritical pretension, gave rise to a great deal of disgust.

Mrs. Dacre and Susie Heath were quite as sorry for Guy as any of the outsiders, who had always liked the handsome, generous-hearted young man. Only they dared not give expression to their sorrow when Clifford Dacre was present. The loss of the diamonds seemed but a small thing as compared with the misery to which it had given rise—misery that threatened to cast a lasting blight over two young lives.

Elinor hardly knew how the dull, grey day came and went. She had become deaf and

blind to all that was going on around her. Bitter, reproachful reveries, fearful forebodings, and useless regrets occupied her mind from morning till night, and neither Susie nor Mrs. Dacre's remonstrances availed to rouse her from the lethargic, hopeless state into which she had fallen.

"How little we anticipated all this trouble when we were looking forward to Christmas," Mrs. Dacre remarked woefully to her cousin, after an ineffectual attempt to persuade Elinor to go for a walk. "I don't think I will ever look forward to any particular season again. It's a comfort to have got rid of our visitors. At least we need not put on company faces, and laugh and talk, when feeling unutterably miserable. Elinor is going away from us to-morrow. After what has occurred she doesn't care to stay here any longer, and I'm not surprised."

"Is she going home?" inquired Susie, whose private and particular troubles pressed heavily upon her mind. Bertie Cavendish and Ned Lawrence had gone away, it is true; but in a very unfriendly mood with each other; while both men sought to gain the first place in her favour, and refused to take no for an answer.

"Mrs. Sylvester has given her an invitation," replied her cousin. "I fancy the poor child shrinks from the idea of going home and leaving Belmont altogether until the trial is over. If anything could move Clifford to pity it would surely be the sight of her pale, sorrowful face."

Before quitting the now hateful Abbey to complete her visit with Mrs. Sylvester, a widow lady who owned a pretty villa residence about a mile from Belmont, Elinor made one ineffectual effort to shake Clifford Dacre's decision, and arouse a feeling of pity and forgiveness in his heart towards Guy.

"He is your kinsman," she said pleadingly, standing before him with loosely clasped hands and dry, burning eyes, from which no tears came to her relief. "Can you not afford to overlook the wrong he has done when you remember the expectations in which he was reared, and the disappointment that befell him when you were declared to be Roger Belmont's heir in Guy's stead?"

"The circumstances you mention have no direct bearing upon the case in point," he replied, with brutal indifference. "Since Roger Belmont chose to leave the estate to me I am not bound to offer any compensation to show any clemency to Guy Singleton on that account. Had he been consulted in the matter it would not have been mine. He took what didn't belong to him, and he must bear the penalty, in common with other offenders."

"But for your sordid conduct, your meanness in refusing to advance him the few thousands for which he asked, the diamonds would not have been stolen!" flashed Elinor.

"My refusal does not justify him in taking my wife's diamonds though," said Clifford Dacre, with a sneer. "You are about as logical in the arguments you employ as the majority of your sex, Miss Campbell."

"If the jewels could be traced, and money were got together for the purpose of restoring them, would you, in that case, refuse to appear against him?" she inquired, eagerly.

"No, that would be compounding a felony," he said, coquettishly. "I shall go through with what I have begun. There is not one atom of nonsensical sentiment in my nature. If all the pretty girls in Christendom were to come to me in a body, asking to have that towel let off, I wouldn't do it."

"You may stand in need of mercy yourself some day. Will you not regret then that you refused to extend it to others?"

"That concerns no one but myself; I'm ready to meet my own liabilities. It doesn't often happen that the one who has just succeeded in bringing a thief to justice shows such a strong desire to obtain his freedom."

The blood rushed into Elinor's pale face at this heartless reminder; while the withering rebuke, the intense loathing that flashed from her blue eyes, caused Clifford Dacre's light orbs to quail before them.

"Yes, I betrayed the man I love," she said, slowly; "but for me he might not have been arrested. The knowledge of what I have done would drive me mad were it not for the reflection that I acted in ignorance, deceived by the disguise he had assumed. Had the faintest inkling of the truth dawned upon my mind, not to recover all the wealth you possess would I have helped to hunt him down."

"You may regret your action in the matter, but the fact remains the same," he remarked, insolently. "You led to the discovery of the thief, and are entitled to share in the reward offered. I shall be happy to write you a cheque whenever you care to claim it."

Elinor turned to go.

"I did not come here to be insulted," she replied, with dearly-bought composure, "although from you I could hardly expect to receive the courtesy of a gentleman. You are incapable of realising the misery that you have helped to produce. Guy Singleton, low as he has fallen, is yet infinitely your superior in every respect. Ask anyone throughout the county the name of the man for whom, at this moment, they feel the most sympathy, and they will answer Guy Singleton. Ask them again whom they most dislike and despise, and they will tell you Clifford Dacre!"

Mrs. Sylvester, a bright, pleasant little woman, with plenty of tact, and no great joys or sorrows of her own to prevent her from giving her whole attention to those of others, was in every way calculated to aid and console Elinor in her almost unprecedented affliction.

She strove to check the exaggerated sense of remorse that weighed so heavily upon the poor girl's mind. Finding that she was not likely to gain any peace until she had seen Guy, Mrs. Sylvester consented to accompany her to the prison in which he was confined.

Through a little piece of kindly favouritism the interview was permitted to take place in the governor's private apartment.

Guy's grey eyes looked hollow and sunken, and there were deep lines already showing themselves on his open, handsome face. His impatience and irritability had vanished, giving place to a quiet, pathetic resignation, a manly, dignified submission to the inevitable that smote Elinor to the heart as she observed it.

"Oh, Guy, can you forgive me for what I have done?" she cried, miserably.

"My poor darling, there is nothing to forgive," he replied, drawing her to him, while Mrs. Sylvester interested herself with some books at the other end of the room. "You would not have pointed me out had you been aware of my identity, I am quite sure of that. It is I who am to blame for yielding to the temptation that has resulted in so much misery for us both."

"What fatal impulse prompted me to turn down that side street, I wonder?" she sobbed. "Had I gone round as usual I should not have seen you."

"We cannot fight against destiny, dear," said Guy, striving to soothe her agitation that far exceeded his own, "and these links in the chain of our lives are not riveted by mere chance."

"You say all this to pacify me," she persisted, "but you know that, had I consented to go with you to Canada in the first instance, this could not have occurred."

"You were quite right to refuse your consent to my foolish proposal. The hardship and the climate out there would have killed you. Indeed, you are not to blame. Let us speak of something else, or we shall waste our brief interview in mutual self-reproach."

"I have tried to move Clifford Dacre's

hard heart to pity you, Guy, but he is merciless."

"You should not have done that," said Guy, quickly. "I would sooner undergo penal servitude than seek for pardon and clemency at that man's hands."

"Where are the diamonds?" she asked, in a whisper. "If they could only be produced it would surely tell in your favour."

"They are gone, past redemption," he replied, firmly. "They vanished into a yawning gulf, and the success I hoped to achieve through their agency proved itself to be an empty bubble."

"But, Guy, how could you get rid of so much money so quickly?" said Elinor, wonderingly. "They were valued at nine thousand pounds!"

Guy smiled sadly.

"I did not receive near that amount for them," he replied. "It is one thing to buy and another to sell, especially when the goods happen to be stolen ones. Some men lose ten times as much on the Turf. Do you remember the night of the fancy-dress ball, Nell, and our meeting in the conservatory?"

"Yes."

"The news of my big loss had just reached me, and I knew that I had sinned in vain. In my utter despair I determined to take my life, my disgraced, dishonoured life. But I could not die without seeing you once more, and I was taking what I thought to be my last glance at you when you saw me, and uttered those earnest, loving words that brought me back to a better frame of mind."

Elinor shuddered as she recalled the scene.

"I knew you were in some great peril, Guy; you will never indulge such a fearful idea again?"

"No, the madness has passed away, to return no more. For the future I will face my troubles manfully, remembering that it frequently requires more courage to live than to die."

"How came the detective to find the grey hat lying in the park? Did you place it there purposely?"

"No, I wore it one night when I went to smoke a cigar in the shrubbery, and the wind blew it off. I put it on from sheer bravado, since suspicion did not point in my direction then. I wish I had been less venturesome. That hat furnished that fellow with a clue."

"My dear, we have only five minutes left," interposed Mrs. Sylvester, warningly. "We must not abuse the governor's kindness."

"Can nothing be done, Guy?" cried Elinor, feverishly. "Must we sit down with folded hands to await the trial?"

"We must, indeed," he rejoined, sadly and submissively. "I dread it more for your sake than my own. That cursed racing! I am not going in for abject gaol-bird penitence, Nell, but I am fain to admit that the Turf and its many adjuncts tend to pervert a man's morals, to lower the tone of his mind, and generally degrade him in the scale of humanity. My ancestors, could they rise from their graves, would shrink from their unworthy descendant."

"But I shall never shrink from you, Guy."

"That is what I have yet to speak of," he replied. "I am a disgraced man, now, Nell, and on that account I free you from your promise. I renounce all claim upon your fidelity. You must learn to forget me."

"I shall never do that," said Elinor, solemnly. "If you are found guilty and imprisoned, I shall wait for you, earning my own living meanwhile. When you come out I shall meet you at the prison-gates, and we will get married quietly, and go to America, or any other place you choose to decide upon. In that way alone can I atone for the wrong and the suffering I have helped to produce."

He could not trust himself to speak, but he caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately, then motioned to Mrs. Sylvester to take her away.

CHAPTER XI.

The theft of the Belmont diamonds excited an immense amount of interest throughout the county. The peculiar circumstances under which the robbery had been committed, and the high, social status of the man who had taken them, served to single it out for special notice.

The local papers teemed with allusions to it, and the assizes were eagerly looked forward to by people of all classes.

Guy Singleton having decided to plead guilty, against the advice, and greatly to the disgust, of the eminent counsel retained for his defence, it was impossible to get up an elaborate case to assert the prisoner's innocence, in accordance with the usual legal traditions.

It only remained to make the most of facts bearing indirectly upon the case, and to represent Clifford Dacre in the worst light as a monster of meanness, regardless of blood ties and family connections, in order to arouse sympathy and compassion for the offender.

The Reverend Claude Grenville was among Guy's most frequent visitors while in prison. The Vicar had ground Latin and Greek into him as a boy, and, later on, had carefully and successfully coached him for his examination.

A firm friendship existed between the two men, and the Vicar deeply regretted the trouble and disgrace that had befallen his old pupil.

They held long confidential discussions, Guy freely unburdening his mind upon every subject save the disposal of the diamonds.

He would not say what he had done with them, or utter a word likely to include anyone else in the transaction, and bring them within the reach of the law.

Not once during the long solitary hours spent in his cell, thinking over his ruined prospects and the sentence that awaited him, did Guy regret the love that had brought him to this pass, leading first to his disinherence, and then urging him on to commit a crime, in order to gain money.

He was wise enough to distinguish between his love for Elinor and the temptation which he might have resisted, and he endeavoured to do so.

The loss of property consequent upon his attachment to Elinor was unavoidable, but not so the offence, the purloining of another man's goods, to which it had given rise through his mad haste to win her.

Graceful girl and slender stripling, they had grown up in close proximity to each other—she at the Vicarage, he at the Abbey. And their love had grown with them almost unconsciously.

Guy's college days, and the removal of Elinor's father to another living, had served to part them, but not to destroy the links so firmly rivetted.

Occasional intercourse had prevented them from drifting apart, and enabled each to gain a deeper insight into the other's sympathetic nature and ever-increasing love.

No, come what might, Guy would never regret his passion for Elinor.

Her present sorrow and distress for the harm she had all unwittingly wrought him only endeared her to him the more. For good or for ill she formed the lodestar of his life.

Old Prebble, the gardener at the Abbey, waylaid the Vicar one day, on the latter's returning from visiting Guy, to ask some questions about him.

Brought up by his uncle as the son of the house, the old servants all doted upon Guy, whose frank, light-hearted, genial manner had gained a firm hold upon their affection. They liked him almost as much as they disliked their new master, Clifford Dacre.

"How do he bear up under it, your reverence?" inquired Prebble, commiseratingly.

"Pretty well," replied the Vicar, stooping down from his stout cob to answer the old man; "but the confinement is injuring his

health. He mentioned your name the other day, Prebble, and spoke of the tricks he used to play you in his schooldays."

"Did he now?" said Prebble, in a gratified tone. "He was always in high spirits, was Master Guy; ready to lead the others when any mad game could be gone in for without the old Squire knowing it. To think of his being shut up there in gaol, it seems terrible, sir. Can't nothing be done to get him out?"

"I'm afraid not," said the Vicar, sadly. "He must take the consequences of his rash act, much as we all regret it."

"If money could do it now," continued Prebble, earnestly, "I'd put my savings of the last twenty years towards making a free man of him, and think them well spent."

"Money is not lacking," said his epiritual adviser; "Lord Chippendale would gladly stand bail for him if bail were allowed."

Prebble emitted a disapproving grunt.

"His lordship's money may be all right," he remarked, vindictively, "but he can't be up to much himself, or he wouldn't have spoken of you, sir, as I overheard him doing to another gentleman in the grounds last Christmas. It was the very worst swearing I ever heard. Billingsgate ain't nothing compared to it."

The corners of the Vicar's large, mobile mouth began to twitch suspiciously; he scented fun in the distance.

"Indeed," he observed, with a gravity becoming to the subject, "I was not aware that Lord Chippendale indulged in bad language, Prebble, or that I had forfeited his good opinion. What did the words you allude to consist of?"

"It was a word, one word in particular, that I won't demean myself by repeating."

"But I insist upon hearing it."

"Well, then, he said you was a decided lat-i-too-di-na-ri-an, begging your reverence's pardon for saying such a thing in your presence."

The Vicar laughed heartily, laughed till the quiet woods rang again, while old Prebble regarded him with a horrified expression. If the clergy could afford to laugh at such profanity, what might not be expected from the laity?

For the credit of his cloth, the Vicar felt bound to explain.

"It's not a wrong word, Prebble," he said, good-naturedly, "although Lord Chippendale probably used it as a word of reproach when alluding to me. It means that I do not condemn other people for refusing to believe just as I believe myself, or think all opinions but my own worthless or wicked."

"In that case, it's a pity there ain't more lat-i-what's-his-name to be found, then," rejoined Prebble, with an air of relief. "There's a many people who set themselves up for judges that would make much better culprits. I'm glad, though, to hear it was nothing so bad after all. That there word's been on my mind for weeks past."

Dulness reigned supreme within the Abbey. No more guests had been invited by its owner. But for Susie Heath, Mrs. Dacre would have had only the society of her amiable lord and master to fall back upon.

Clifford Dacre's temper did not improve as the coldness of his neighbours and their avoidance of him became more strongly marked. He laid his social failure at Guy's door, and no well-meant remonstrance from mutual friends could shake the bulldog obstinacy with which he set himself to work out the young man's ruin through the agency of the law.

Susie Heath's perplexities reached their climax when she received a letter from Bertie Cavendish, informing her that, upon the death of a relative, he had recently come into a nice little estate, valued at four thousand a year. He wound up by urging his suit upon her more vehemently than ever, and announcing his intention of coming down to the Abbey in person to receive his reply.

The next post brought her a letter from Ned Lawrence. Poor Ned, upon whom fickle fortune had bestowed neither briefs nor legacies, wrote in a very desponding mood. He had heard of his rival's stroke of good luck, and he felt pretty sure that Bertie would use it to turn the scales in his favour, and win the first place in Susie's good books.

He implored her in passionate terms to wait until he should be in a position to claim her, while reproaching her for all the mental disquiet she had caused him; winding up with a dark threat to go to ruin by a short cut in the event of her rejecting him, and promising to marry Bertie Cavendish.

It was not by any means a pleasant letter to receive, and Susie, between her two suitors, felt rather frightened. She was only certain upon one point, that she did not wish to marry either of them, and she stood greatly in need of advice.

But to whom could she go? Elinor Campbell was absorbed in her own great trouble, and Mrs. Dacre, although a nice, good-natured little woman, was hardly capable of advising anyone when such an important matter as the choice of a husband was in question.

Susie was standing on the rustic bridge that spanned the river at one end of the village on her return from a long, solitary ramble, gazing listlessly down into the clear water, when she espied a tall man carrying a Gladstone bag coming towards her from the station.

For one brief second her heart fairly jumped into her mouth. She thought it was Bertie Cavendish, and, coward-like, prepared to take refuge in flight.

But a second glance convinced her that the tall, soldier-like form, the erect military carriage, belonged to Captain Falconer.

He joined her upon the bridge, and they exchanged greetings, feeling somewhat uncertain as to the attitude they were to assume towards each other. Active warfare had previously existed between them, but a truce was mutually decided upon, as each had grown rather tired of fighting.

"You have not been long away?" said Susie, for want of a better remark.

"No, Dacre told me I might run down for a day or two whenever I liked, without writing for a formal invitation," said the Captain, glancing keenly at the pretty, troubled face beneath the Mary Anderson hat. "You see I have taken him at his word, Miss Heath. I hardly hoped to find you still here."

"Oh, I am a fixture," replied Susie, with a wan smile. "Mrs. Dacre is glad to have me with her. We are by no means a lively party at the Abbey now."

"Are you alluding to poor Guy's imprisonment, or to some other trouble?" inquired Captain Falconer.

"That is very dreadful," she rejoined, hesitatingly, "but—"

"There is something else," he continued. "I wish you would put your dislike for me on one side, and make me your confidant."

Susie's pride and wilfulness vanished as that deep, tender, musical voice fell upon her ear. It would be humiliating to confess her faults and their consequences to the man who had once openly rebuked her. But she had no one else to turn to for advice, and somehow he seemed to be more sympathetic and less hateful than of old.

"You scolded me once for flirting," she began, nervously; "you said I had no right to draw men on just to please my own vanity. I have been well punished for my heartlessness since then. If you read these letters you will understand the predicament in which I am placed."

She handed him the two letters, and he read them without making any immediate remark.

"Well," she said, rather impatiently, as he gave them back to her.

"Do you intend to marry Bertie Cavendish?" he inquired, his handsome face growing a shade paler.

"No, a thousand times no!"

"Or Ned Lawrence?"

"Certainly not; I don't care for either of them in that way. I only want to get rid of them both, and to know that they are on friendly terms with each other again. They were like Damon and Pythias till I came between them."

"I can see but one way out of the difficulty," said Captain Falconer; "but then you may not care to adopt it."

"I would do almost anything to regain my peace of mind."

Captain Falconer proceeded to unfold his plan. Susie's cheeks grew rosy red as she listened to him, and broke an unoffending twig into twenty pieces.

"It shall be as you wish," she said, with downcast eyes, when he paused and waited eagerly for an answer. "You will see them both and prevent them from coming here again to persecute me?"

"I will."

"And you'll try and reconcile them to—existing circumstances, and each other?"

"Most decidedly."

"It is certainly a very original method for getting out of a difficulty."

"And a very satisfactory one into the bargain," he replied, radiantly. "At least, I think so. I consider the idea to be the most brilliant I have ever evolved from my inner consciousness."

"I shall not add to your self-esteem by praising it," said Susie, with a queer little smile; "you know how much I dislike you, Captain Falconer."

CHAPTER XII.

"Elinor, Granny Pengold sent a boy here this morning with a message that she should like very much to see you before you go away," said Mrs. Sylvester to her guest. "You know she is bed-ridden, and not likely to live long, poor old soul. Why not go and see her to-day? The walk would do you good."

"I might meet some of the people from the Abbey," replied Elinor, listlessly, "and I wish to avoid them; one and all. What can Granny Pengold want to see me for?"

"I don't know; perhaps it is only a sick woman's whim; but I think, were I you, I would gratify it. My dear girl, you really must make an effort to bear your trouble bravely, and shake off this terrible depression, or you will be ill."

She put down her work and glanced compassionately at Elinor as she spoke. The latter was crouching over the fire with a book, of which she had not read a line, in her hand.

There were great dark circles round the girl's blue eyes; her cheeks had paled and fallen in, while a look of intense, helpless misery was never absent from her face.

The terrible position in which she found herself placed had effected this sad change; the once light-hearted, happy, talented girl was now a weary, remorseful, anguished woman, bearing about with her wherever she went a crushed load of sorrow and suspense, that threatened soon to break her down either in mind or body.

That Guy Singleton should be in prison awaiting his trial at the Assizes through her instrumentality alone seemed hardly possible to her, as she brooded ceaselessly over the hideous fact—the nightmare that refused to vanish before the cheerful light of day.

Guy, her Guy, who would not have yielded to temptation in the first instance but for the love he bore her, to be thus disgraced and held up to public notice! Oh, it was too horrible! Her ambitious ideas and her weak dread of poverty had urged him on to amass wealth by any means. Then, when he might have escaped the consequences of his wrong-doing, she had stood in his way, and pointed him to the paid hirelings of justice. The most fendish woman could hardly have proved herself to be a more fatal Circe than poor Elinor, who had

thus, in all innocence, frustrated the plans and destroyed the good name of the man she loved best on earth.

She took a bitter delight in painting her own conduct towards him in the blackest possible colours. She regarded the theft he had committed less as his crime than her own, since, but for her, such a wild, wicked scheme would not have occurred to him.

She grew paler and thinner day by day, while the knowledge that she would be the principal witness against him when the trial came on nearly maddened her. Night after night Elinor's overwrought brain brought the dreaded scene before her in sleep. The crowded court, the eager, excited lookers-on, the stern-faced judge, and last, but not least, the prisoner in the dock, with his sad, forgiving face turned towards his unwilling accuser. She went through it all scores of times, to wake just as the sentence was being delivered, and with a moan and a prayer, to hope that something might happen to prevent that fearful trial from ever taking place.

Her father had written, telling her to return home, but she had prevailed upon him to let her stay a little longer with Mrs. Sylvester. The small parsonage, the noisy children, the questions she would be expected to answer concerning Guy's capture, made her dread leaving the quiet retreat where tortured nerves and brain had no annoyance from without to contend against.

A second letter, written in a more imperative strain than the first, admitted of no further reprieve whatever. Much as she liked her, Mrs. Sylvester was not sorry to learn that Elinor's stay was drawing to a close. The girl's changed appearance made her feel very uneasy, and, after all, her mother was the right person for her to be with under the circumstances.

"You will have your packing to do to-morrow, dear," said gentle Mrs. Sylvester. "Be persuaded by me; go and see poor Granny Pengold this afternoon. She will be so disappointed if you leave without paying her the visit she has asked for. I'll put the wing of a chicken and some jelly in a little basket for her, and you can take it with you."

"Very well," rejoined Elinor, passively. It seemed such an unimportant affair either way; only she had no wish to disappoint Granny Pengold, one of her father's old parishioners.

Mrs. Sylvester wrapped her up warmly, and started her off, basket in hand.

As the girl went along the road with bowed head and fur cloak wrapped closely round her, Mrs. Sylvester watched her from the window gravely and anxiously.

"If she is compelled to give evidence against Guy her reason will become affected," thought the kind-hearted little lady, sadly. "She is bearing a heavy burden, poor child, and circumstances have woven a terrible web around her."

Elinor went on her way, regardless of the bleak, cutting wind, and the occasional snow-flakes. External discomforts troubled her not at all, since her thoughts were constantly turned inward, dwelling upon her own great trouble, and the crowning misery of the approaching trial.

To-day, for the first time, she had been able to arrive at a definite conclusion. The fog had lifted from off her mind, leaving it bright and clear for action.

She would not give evidence against Guy; no power on earth should compel her to do so. Since he had pleaded guilty, a term of imprisonment doubtless awaited him under any circumstances. She, however, would not be there to take her place in the witness-box. Had she not done him harm enough already?

Instead of going to her home on the following day, Elinor determined to go to London and lose herself there for a while. Always accustomed to loving protection, the idea of being thrown among strangers, dependent

upon her efforts for a livelihood, was a terrible one to her. But it formed the only alternative. She had a little money with her, and when that was gone, she would be able to earn more by teaching. Anything seemed preferable to appearing in court as a witness for the prosecution.

Her plans were only partly matured by the time she arrived at Granny Pengold's cottage.

With its thatched roof and diamond-paned windows, round which grew a hardy red creeper, the little domicile presented a very picturesque appearance.

Elinor lifted the latch and passed through the homely parlour into the bedroom beyond.

Granny Pengold, who had expected company, was sitting up in bed, a little scarlet and grey shawl that Elinor had knitted being thrown round her shoulders, while a large frilled white night-cap adorned her head.

She was a tall, big-made woman, with a wrinkled fresh-coloured face, and a quantity of neatly-arranged grey hair. Simple and wholesome as the flowers that grew in her cottage garden, Granny Pengold was not without her share of homespun wisdom and shrewdness.

She had nursed Squire Belmont during his last illness, and she took a keen interest in the fortunes of the Belmont family, with which she had been connected more or less all her lifetime.

"Eh, Miss Elinor, but I am glad to see you," she said, earnestly, as Elinor approached the bedside. "A sight of you is good for sair een, as the Scotch folks say. Take off your hat and cloak, there's a dear young lady, and sit with me a bit. I've got so many questions to ask you that I'm above putting to other folks."

Elinor did as she was told with the passive obedience of a child, Granny's keen eyes regarding her compassionately the while.

"We'll have a cup of tea presently when Kitty comes in from school. She pretends to look after things, but, lor, what can you expect from a bit of a girl like that?" continued the old woman. "I daresay the place is in a nice muck and muddle. It was tidy enough so long as I could keep about, but now I am as helpless as a log."

"Everything seems to be in nice order," said Elinor, consolingly, "and you are the image of neatness, Mrs. Pengold."

"I never was a sloven," replied Granny, "and I always like to look fresh and clean. I goffered this cap myself, Miss Elinor, with Kitty to heat the irons for me. But it isn't my best one. I'm keeping that against the time when I shall be laid out in my coffin."

In spite of her sorrow, Elinor could not repress a smile at this instance of feminine vanity surviving in extreme old age. Where would you expect to find an old man keeping his best nightcap in reserve for his last equipment?

"I want to know the truth about Mr. Guy," said Granny Pengold, presently. "I've had that diamond robbery dinned into my ears by people till I'm sick and tired of listening to it. The diamonds and the Abbey, too, ought to have been his by right, poor, dear young gentleman. I up and told the Squire he was committing a sin in cutting him off without a shilling, and him a lying on his death-bed at the time; but he only threw a pillow at me, and told me to mind my own business. His temper got dreadful towards the last. Miss Elinor, what made him take them? Was he in debt?"

"No, I think not, but he wanted money," rejoined Eleanor, vacantly.

"How was it that you of all people helped to get him taken up for the robbery?" inquired the old woman. "They may say what they like, but I'll never believe you did it on purpose."

Elinor hid her face in the bed-clothes, and sobbed convulsively.

"I would far sooner have died," she said, brokenly. "He was disguised, and I did not know what I had done till it was too late to draw back. He would not have taken the diamonds but for me. He wanted money to speculate with, since I had refused to marry him as a poor man. I have been his evil genius all along. I wonder he does not hate me even as I hate myself."

Granny Pengold stroked the bowed head with its wealth of short, wavy brown hair, tenderly and compassionately.

"Don't say such bitter things, dearie," she replied, gently. "There is no hatred in his heart for you, nothing but love. Why, I mind the days when, as boy and girl, you were always together, and a very pretty pair you made. Poor Mr. Guy! It's taken a load off me to know you didn't point him out to the police wilfully, only through believing it to be somebody else. Clifford Dacre ought to stop the prosecution; he never expected at one time to step into his uncle's shoes. Mr. Guy was always the favourite till he refused to marry Miss Barclay, and crossed the Squire's stony will. I believe at the last the old man felt sorry that he had beggared his sister's son. He tried hard to make Mr. Guy understand something when he arrived an hour or two before the Squire's death. But paralysis had tied his tongue, and he died, leaving the estate to that Clifford Dacre, that I can't bear. It almost breaks my old heart to think of Mr. Guy in prison."

Elinor sprang up quickly from her kneeling posture.

"Let us talk about anything else," she said, wildly, "or my mind will give way. I dare not dwell upon his unhappy position, or look into the future, so dark and threatening, that awaits us both."

"The darkest hour comes just before the dawn," rejoined Granny Pengold, consolingly. "I pray that it may be so in your case, Miss Elinor. Heaven's ways are not our ways, remember, and He can open a door in what looks to us like a blank wall. One reason why I wanted to see you is, I've got a little present for you. I'm going to give you the apostle spoons that belonged to my mother before me."

"Oh, Mrs. Pengold, I cannot rob you of your cherished heirlooms."

"But I want you to have them," persisted Granny. "You'll value them, whereas my married niece would give them to the children to play with, as like as not. I shan't be here much longer, and then you'll have something to recollect me by. They're in the bureau. Perhaps you'll be kind enough to open it and get them out."

Elinor turned to the large old-fashioned mahogany bureau that stood in one corner of the room. It had bright brass handles to its many drawers, while the sloping top opened in one piece, revealing a number of smaller drawers within.

"What a quaint, delightful old thing!" she exclaimed. "Some people would give almost any money to obtain it."

"It belonged to Squire Belmont," replied Granny Pengold. "It used to stand by his bedside. He could make a desk of it by pulling out two little supports, and opening the top. After he was paralysed he was always a-pointing to it and a-muttering, as if he wanted me to look in it. I took all the drawers out one by one and carried them to him; but he shook his head nearly off to show me that wasn't what he wanted. I put it down to his being light-headed, and took no more notice of the pointings and mutterings. When he died I made bold to ask for the old bureau, and I got it. Otherwise, it would only have been bundled away to make room for new furniture. You'll find the apostle spoons in the third drawer to the right hand, Miss Elinor."

Elinor opened the slanting top and looked in the direction indicated for the spoons. She

found them carefully wrapped in paper—four large, flat-bowled, silver spoons—each handle surmounted by a beautifully-designed apostolic figure, calculated to make the heart of a collector dance with joy.

In attempting to close the drawer again Elinor found it stiff, and unyielding. She had to use some force. It yielded suddenly, and went in with a bang, causing an hitherto unseen aperture to fly open.

A piece of parchment had been concealed behind it. Almost mechanically, Elinor opened it, and read the contents.

"Can't you find them apostolic spoons?" demanded Granny Pengold, tartly. Elinor's back was towards her, and she could not see what was going on at the bureau. "They must be there, for I put 'em away myself. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are in tissue paper."

Elinor made no reply; a shiver of pain or rapture thrilled through her from head to foot as she went on reading.

"Miss Elinor," cried the old woman, "why don't you say something? Are you ill?"

The appealing, frightened tone caused Elinor to turn round with the parchment still in her hand. As the wintry sunlight fell upon her face, Granny Pengold uttered an expression of astonishment, while Matthew, Mark, Luke and John fell with a little unheeded clatter upon the floor.

CHAPTER XIII.

The court was crowded to excess when Guy Singleton's trial came on for hearing. Good places were eagerly fought for, and the "press-gang," sitting calmly at their table, with room enough and to spare, were objects of envy to many persons uncomfortably wedged in the midst of the great heaving throng.

Ladies figured largely among the interested onlookers, and pretty faces glanced compassionately at the handsome prisoner, standing so erect and passive in the dock.

To the surprise of all acquainted with his previous decision, Guy Singleton pleaded Not Guilty, in a firm, confident voice.

He evidently felt his position acutely. At the same time his bearing did not resemble that of a man who expected to receive a more or less heavy sentence. Judging from his demeanour, Guy might have been the individual least concerned in the result of the trial.

Elinor was in Court, accompanied by her father, a thin, clean-shaven, ascetic-looking clergyman, more than a little annoyed to think his daughter had become involved in such a public and unpleasant affair.

She had not carried out her intention of going to London, and concealing her whereabouts to avoid giving evidence at the trial. She stood there waiting for her name to be called with a strangely hopeful and expectant look upon her fair face, that caused some of those present to deem her cold and callous.

A glance that passed between her and the prisoner, full of mutual understanding and assurance, might have caused her critics to change their opinion, had they detected it.

The trial commenced, and the witnesses for the prosecution came forward, Vickers, Elinor Campbell, Clifford Dacre, and Solomon Levi being among the principal.

Solomon Levi's statement was a lie from beginning to end. That venerable rascal had received the diamonds from Guy a few hours after their abstraction from the safe. He had gone to London to dispose of them, giving Guy little more than one-third of their real value.

Aware that the detectives were dogging his footsteps, Guy had made his way to the Jew's house in disguise, later on hoping to wring a further sum of money from him, and perhaps to hide there for awhile till his vessel sailed—a plan that had ended in his arrest.

Guy was too honourable to implicate Solomon in the transaction; he preferred bearing the brunt of it himself. Aware of

this, the Jew felt tolerably safe. He gave his not very important evidence in a plausible manner, adhering to his previous assertion that he knew nothing of Guy, and had never had any dealings with him.

He was permitted to leave the witness-box without a stain upon his character, barring the smudges already there, and the exact disposal of the diamonds remained for ever a secret between the two men most concerned in it.

Clifford Dacre was received with slight hisses and other marks of disfavour, immediately suppressed. Elinor attracted the most notice as she took her place in the witness-box, blushing beneath the cynosure of so many eyes, yet calm and self-possessed.

She gave her evidence in a simple, straightforward manner, without flinching. Only when she went back to her father did she realise the strain she had put upon herself while standing there.

The excitement became intense as the last witness for the prosecution left the box. In the face of such indisputable facts, surely the cleverest barrister must fail to set up a successful defence.

No witnesses came forward on Guy's behalf, but his legal representative rose and addressed the Court.

"Evidence of a remarkable nature has transpired since the prisoner was committed for trial," he began, smoothly; "evidence that entirely does away with the supposed offence, and presents him in the light of an injured and innocent man. The diamonds disposed of by him were his own property. A will has recently been discovered, bearing a later date than the one by virtue of which Mr. Dacre succeeded his uncle, Roger Belmont, Esquire, in the possession of Belmont Abbey. The second will bequeaths the said Abbey and all appertaining to it, including the family diamonds, which are specially mentioned, to Guy Singleton and his heirs for ever. The fact speaks for itself. You cannot justly punish a man for doing as he likes with his own property."

A low murmur of astonishment surged throughout the Court when he finished speaking. Even the judge looked surprised, while the jurymen stared blankly at each other, wondering if their legal knowledge would enable them to crack the very hard nut just submitted to them.

A loud, angry voice broke in upon the profound silence with startling effect.

"It's a lie," shouted Clifford Dacre, beside himself with fear and passion. "The will recently discovered is a clumsy forgery. Belmont Abbey belongs to me, and I defy any man to take it from me on such evidence."

The judge administered a stern rebuke to him, bidding him conduct himself properly, or leave the Court. The counsel for the prosecution implored him to accept the advice thus given; but the dread of losing Belmont Abbey and all pertaining to it had rendered him almost a madman.

Granny Pengold's deposition, taken down by a clerk who had visited her for that purpose, greatly to her delight, was then read. Elinor came forward again to relate her discovery of the will in the secret drawer. The remaining witness to it, an old servant, who, after his master's death, had gone to live with a relative in Wales, and who had been diligently hunted up, came next, and his shrill, quavering voice could be heard in every corner of the crowded Court.

He well remembered signing the will, as well as if it had happened only yesterday. When, after Squire Belmont's death, it could not be found, he believed that his master had destroyed it, Roger Belmont having alternated between love for his favourite nephew and a desire to punish him for thwarting his wishes to the very last day of his life.

That was his, Antony Pendle's, signature sure enough, in large round hand at the bottom of the will. The other was that of the farm-

bailliff, who had met with an accident, and died before Roger Belmont.

Clifford Dacre's jaw dropped lower and lower as the chain of evidence in Guy's favour—the evidence that would deprive him of thirty thousand a year—grew more complete and irrefutable.

The prosecuting counsel, wholly unprepared for such an event, had but little to say, and said that little badly. After listening to a terse, incisive speech from the opposite side, followed by the judge's summing up, the puzzled jury retired to consider their verdict.

An almost painful silence born of suspense followed their departure; you might have heard a pin drop in any part of the Court.

Guy Singleton played nervously with his watch chain. He had been properly prepared for this astounding revelation by his counsel, to whose keeping Elinor had at once confided the will. As yet he was hardly able to recognise the fair prospects opened up before him by its discovery. He felt mystified and uncertain, his thoughts refusing to carry him beyond an anxious hope that the existence of the will would prove sufficient to exonerate him from the offence he was charged with committing.

Clifford Dacre stood by his legal adviser talking furiously, and biting his finger nails almost to the quick.

If the verdict went in Guy's favour it would be tantamount to declaring that he was no longer the proud possessor of Belmont Abbey. How could he ever go back to the old life and the narrow income that had once hemmed in his desires on every side? He hardly knew which he hated most—Roger Belmont for making that second will, or Elinor Campbell for finding it.

The jury returned after an unpleasant half-hour spent in the retiring-room. They had found it a difficult matter to agree, some arguing that Guy, having removed the diamonds, believing them to belong to his cousin, had been guilty of theft, while others maintained that the existence of the will, although unknown to him at the time, served to nullify the offence.

The majority of the jurymen knew more about selling meat and making garments than balancing nice points of law. Their honest heads grew confused when casuistry was a question, and they were all glad to scramble out of the metaphysical bog into which they had unexpectedly fallen.

They all liked Guy, and one by one the reluctant minority allowed themselves to be coaxed or bullied into joining the majority.

"We find the prisoner 'Not Guilty!'"

To say the verdict was received with applause would be a very mild form of putting it. Not even the judge could suppress the ringing cheer that fairly shook the Court, and announced to the people outside the satisfactory conclusion of the trial.

Hardly knowing how he got there, Guy presently found himself in the lobby with people pressing round him on all sides to congratulate him upon the double share of good fortune that had befallen him.

Clifford Dacre forced his way roughly through the throng, and confronted his cousin with an insane hatred and defiant despair portrayed upon his bull-dog face.

"I refuse to acknowledge your claim to the Abbey," he shouted, in hoarse, passion-choked tones. "That will be nothing but a forgery, got up to deprive me of my rights. I'll contest it while I've a pound left to keep the lawyers going. If you even get the estate, it will be only as a mere husk, swallowed up in legal expenses. I am about to return to my residence, and I dare you to enter it again under any circumstances."

"This is not the time or the place for such a discussion," said Guy, calmly. Being the conqueror, he could afford to show some forbearance, even to Clifford Dacre. "The affair had better be left in the hands of the

negative lawyers. You may assure yourself upon one point—I shall not attempt to re-enter the Abbey while you are in it."

The Vicar took possession of Guy at this moment, and elbowed him through the crowd to the door of the Court, where he had a carriage waiting. Elinor and her father had already taken their places in it.

"You must be my guests for to-day," he said, pleasantly, as they drove away amidst another cheer.

"Under Providence I owe my escape to you," said Guy, lifting Elinor's hand to his lips.

"It was to be," she replied, tears of joy and thankfulness standing in her dark blue eyes. "I shall always value the apostle spoons, and Granny Pengold deserves a reward for taking such care of the old bureau."

"She shall not be forgotten," said Guy. "I must pay her a visit before long, and tender my thanks to her in person."

"You have had a narrow escape," observed Elinor's father, somewhat coldly. Inclined to be severe in his judgment of others, he could not altogether overlook the fault of which the young man had been guilty.

"Yes, a very narrow one," said Guy, humbly. "Do not imagine for a moment that I can ever misrepresent the conduct of which I have been guilty to myself. In intention, if not in deed, I committed a robbery. The will does not alter that fact, although it exempts me from punishment."

"But we are all liable to err," interposed Elinor, with a pleading look at her father; "and if you have sinned, Guy, you have also suffered deeply."

A very pleasant little party assembled in the Vicarage dining-room that night; Elinor and her father, Mrs. Sylvester and Guy being among the Vicar's guests. Guy looked pale and thoughtful, while his eyes frequently strayed in Elinor's direction with a wistful, appealing glance that never failed to meet with a reassuring return. Whatever others might think or say concerning him, she at least would always remain staunch and true.

Things were going less smoothly at the Abbey. Clifford Dacre had returned home and frightened his wife and Susie by the passionate invective he indulged in and the quantity of brandy he drank. The news he brought could not fail to startle and distress them, glad though they were to hear of Guy's acquittal. Poor Mrs. Dacre vainly wished that it could have been brought about in some other way. To leave the Abbey where she had reigned as mistress would be a sore trial to her.

The rag-tag and bob-tail of Bromley contemplated an excursion to the Abbey to smash all available windows as a practical mark of the dislike they entertained towards Clifford Dacre. Some calmer spirit reminding them, however, that the Abbey now belonged to Guy Singleton, they abandoned that idea, and made a great bonfire instead to show their delight at Guy's release.

Clifford Dacre watched the red glow rising in the distance with bitter hatred and useless regret tugging at his heart-strings.

"Fool that I was not to buy him out and accept the terms he once offered!" he exclaimed, shaking his fist in impatient fury in the direction of the rising flames. "I hate you, Guy Singleton, and I might have got rid of you so easily and prevented all this. Oh, fool! fool! fool!"

An interview with his lawyer tended to convince Clifford Dacre of the genuine nature of the second will. No evidence was lacking, no doubt could be thrown upon it; while two doctors bore witness to Roger Belmont's sanity up to the last moment of his life.

Legally speaking, Clifford Dacre had not a leg to stand upon. His lawyers advised him to yield with a good grace, and to accept any proposition that Guy might think proper to

offer. He flung himself out of the office in a worse rage than ever on hearing this. Not in one, but in every, respect had Guy got the better of him.

CHAPTER XIV.

Captain Falconer only made a short stay at the Abbey. The attitude Clifford Dacre had assumed towards Guy did not please him. He went to see the prisoner, and then returned to town to fulfil the mission he had undertaken at Susie's bidding, with an olive-branch in his hand, figuratively speaking.

He invaded Bertie Cavendish's chambers, and invited that rising barrister to dine with him at the club. Bertie accepted the invitation readily enough, and the Captain went away in high feather to call upon Ned Lawrence.

To his surprise and disgust, Bertie, on entering the club dining-room at the appointed hour—a well-dressed figure in black and white à la Whistler—beheld Ned Lawrence standing on the hearthrug talking to Captain Falconer.

A glance of defiance was exchanged between the two men, Ned fully sharing in his late friend's annoyance and surprise at this unexpected meeting between them. Captain Falconer had not thought proper to inform either of his guests of the pleasure in store for them; otherwise he would not have succeeded in bringing them together.

"Deuced bad form to invite two fellows who are not on good terms with each other," thought Bertie Cavendish, angrily. "The Captain ought to know better."

He would fain have turned his back upon his host and fellow-guest, but the canons of good society would in that case have been outraged. There was nothing to be done but to shake hands with them both, and launch into conversation.

Bertie and Ned were fearfully polite to each other; after the fashion of men who would like to take each other by the throat, if circumstances were not against such a proceeding. A mirthful gleam shone from time to time in Captain Falconer's dark eyes as he quietly took stock of his guests. He refrained from making any allusion to the cause of contention while dinner was in progress, however. He wished them both to appreciate it, being fond of getting a satisfactory return for money invested.

"Bad job for Singleton, isn't it?" said Bertie Cavendish, when they adjourned to the smoking-room, which, to Captain Falconer's relief, contained no other occupants. "He's got himself into a frightful mess over those diamonds. If they sentence the poor beggar I hope it will be as a first-class misdemeanant."

"When does the trial come on?" inquired Ned.

"To-morrow," said Captain Falconer. "It's a wretched affair altogether. It ought to have been hushed up from the first. I went to see poor Guy last week while staying at the Abbey."

"Oh, you've been down there again, have you?" remarked Bertie. "Miss Heath is still there. I suppose?"

"Yes."

"I'm going down myself in a few days," he continued, with a confident smile that nearly drove Ned Lawrence mad.

"Indeed! They will doubtless be glad to see you. By-the-by, Miss Heath has intrusted me with a somewhat delicate task. She fancies that she has in some way been the means of destroying the friendly relations previously existing between you and Mr. Lawrence. She wishes me, if possible, to effect a renewal of them. When a lady commands, a soldier, you know, has only to obey."

"No interference, however well-meant, can be permitted in connection with Miss Heath's demeanour towards myself," said Bertie Cavendish, haughtily.

"Her decision alone can put an end to the present unsatisfactory state of affairs," re-

marked Ned Lawrence. "I am also going down to Belmont Abbey very shortly."

"What if Miss Heath has already decided?" asked Captain Falconer, lazily watching the fragrant smoke-rings that curled around his head. "What if she has kindly consented to marry your humble servant, and deputed him to inform you of that fact?"

"Falconer, is this the truth, or are you only humbugging us?" cried Bertie Cavendish.

"It's the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," replied the Captain, placidly. "Miss Heath felt rather alarmed on ascertaining the harm her thoughtless encouragement had wrought in several instances. She is going to throw herself away upon me to prevent other suitors from cutting throats or fighting duels. Such generous self-sacrifice ought to be duly appreciated."

"She's a flirt; a pretty, heartless, good-for-nothing flirt," said Bertie, savagely.

"She came within an ace of accepting my proposal," observed Ned, ruefully. "She must be the most harmless woman under the sun."

Nevertheless, it was consoling to know that Bertie had no chance—that he was equally out of the matrimonial running.

"You will please to remember, gentlemen, that you are speaking of my affianced wife," said Captain Falconer. "Making all due allowance for your disappointment, I cannot listen to a repetition of the term already used."

"No offence to you, Falconer," rejoined Ned Lawrence, apologetically, "but you must admit that Miss Heath treated us rather shabbily by raising our hopes to no purpose."

"I am quite willing to admit that. Miss Heath, too, is aware of her fault. For the future she intends to renounce flirting altogether. Now, just to show that you bear no ill-will towards either of us, be kind enough to shake hands like reasonable men, and I'll wire the joyful intelligence to her at once."

Bertie and Ned seemed unwilling to comply with his request.

"What a pair of fools you are!" said the Captain, impatiently. "Why, you've nothing left to quarrel about. The bone of contention having been removed, I'd suggest Boulogne sands, and offer to second either of you, but what would you gain by it? All London would laugh at the absurdity of two men fighting a duel about a woman who did not wish to marry either of them. Tragedy is out of the question; let us ring the curtain down on a drawing-room comedy instead."

Ridicule can sometimes effect more than the most serious argument. Ned and Bertie, forced to admit the ludicrous aspect of the affair, shook hands with each other and stammered forth some rather lame congratulations.

"Coffee for three," said the Captain, in a satisfied tone. "That's a much better order, my dear fellows, than pistols for two."

He made a good host, but, in spite of his efforts, conversation languished and the guests departed early.

"Where are you going?" inquired Bertie Cavendish of his friend.

"Home."

"Nonsense," linking his arm in Ned's, "We'll let bygones be bygones, and look in at the opera together."

"I consider that I have been shamefully treated," grumbled Ned.

"So have I. Susie Heath's the worst specimen of a flirt I ever encountered. I don't envy Falconer his bargain."

"She came between us, or we should have remained friends."

"Of course; it was entirely her fault that we quarrelled. Never mind, we'll cement our broken friendship and try to forget her. What annoys me most is to think what a laugh she and Falconer must have enjoyed at our expense."

"It's all they'll get. I'll see them hanged before I buy a wedding present."

Damon and Pythias had enough to discuss on the next day, when the evening papers

contained a long account of Guy Singleton's trial and its remarkable termination.

About a fortnight from the time of Guy's release a very quiet wedding took place at Belmont, Elinor's father being the officiating clergyman.

Guy had decided upon going abroad for several years till the sensational circumstances connected with his one great mistake should have become less prominent in men's minds. A tenant had been found for the Abbey, and Mr. Campbell had yielded to his earnest pleading and consented to accept the young man as his son-in-law.

Broken in health, with a keen sense of disgrace still weighing him down—for at least in theory he had been guilty of theft—Guy stood greatly in need of care and attention. Who more calculated to bestow both than Elinor? So the marriage took place previous to their departure, Susie being the only bridesmaid.

"I've some news for you, dear!" she whispered, bringing her pretty, radiant face close to Elinor's, when the latter was standing in her room, robed in pure simple white, waiting for the carriage that was to convey them both to the church. "I've got rid of those dreadful boys; they'll never annoy me again, and I am going to be married. Can you guess his name?"

"Ernest Falconer?" suggested Elinor, laughingly.

"Why, who told you?" said Susie, wonderingly. "I thought you would never guess, because we used to hate each other so fiercely."

"On that account I felt sure you would end by falling in love," she replied. "Good heavens, when converted, frequently make the best lovers. Susie, dear, I wish you every happiness."

Guy Singleton behaved generously towards his cousin on succeeding him in the possession of the estate. He knew that he had been greatly in fault when he stooped so low as to possess himself of the diamonds, believing them to be Clifford Dacre's property. He overlooked the latter's unforgiving conduct, and offered him a cheque for twenty thousand pounds, which Clifford Dacre accepted with a very ill grace.

Foreign travel went a long way towards setting Guy Singleton up again, and restoring his lost health and spirits. His bonny, devoted wife was his constant attendant, anticipating every wish, and endeavouring to prevent his thoughts from straying back to painful memories.

They were well received in pleasant, intellectual foreign society. Going from town to town, and country to country, the months and years flew swiftly by until they could no longer refuse to heed the many letters they received from home, requesting their return.

The Abbey lease expired, and they had no excuse left for their wandering, Bohemian existence.

"We must go home, dear," said Elinor to her husband, putting his thoughts and her own into words. "The Abbey is once more at our disposal, and we shall be neglecting an obvious duty if we refuse to go back and live among our own people."

So they came back to England after their long exile. Any doubts or fears they may have entertained with regard to their reception were set at rest by the greeting that awaited them. The village people and tenantry evinced their friendly welcome through the medium of bonfires and triumphal arches, while the county families lost no time in calling to congratulate Guy Singleton and his wife upon their return.

Elinor experienced a feeling of terrified delight on finding the stolen diamonds, reset and sparkling in their blue velvet cases, on her dressing table.

"Oh! Guy, how did you manage to regain them?" she cried. "They are lovely, but I am half afraid of them. They have wrought so much mischief in their time."

"I got the man I sold them to, and who had parted with them, to trace them out for me at a considerable cost," replied Guy. "Then I had them reset for my wife. Darling, you deserve some recompense, since, after all, you failed to obtain the Thousand Pounds Reward."

[THE END.]

WITTY SAYINGS

Not many brilliant sayings of the Greeks have come down to us; but what could be more pertinent or pithy than the rejoinder of Lysander to a citizen of Megara who at a common council of Greek States was "talking big" and laying down a policy with an authoritative air: "Your words want a city?"

The cynical tub-philosopher, Diogenes, gave utterance to some rasping sarcasms. Seeing a number of persons firing at a mark, he placed himself directly before it, saying that it was the safest place. Going by a house, over the door of which was inscribed: "Let nothing evil enter here!" he asked: "How then can the owner get in?"

A happy example of French wit was the reply of Voltaire when, having extolled Haller, he was told that he was very generous, since Haller had said the very contrary of him. "Perhaps both of us are mistaken," said Voltaire, after a short pause.

A university student, who certainly would have distinguished himself if he had gone in for the law, when asked by his professor one Monday morning if he had attended church the day before, replied, "Yes, sir, I attended the First Church," this usually meaning the first service. Then came the second question. "Are you not aware, sir, that there was no service at the First Church yesterday?" The student rose to the situation: "I meant the first church I came to, professor."

Another witty university student once asked Professor Caswell whether his name would be as well without the C.

It was an ex-graduate from the same place who, at the age of sixty, led to the hymeneal altar a bride of twenty-five, and who, being asked by a friend how he contrived, at his frosty time of life to win the affections of so young a woman, replied: "Oh, it was easy enough! I just addressed to her two lines of poetry. I wrote:

"If love is a flame that is kindled by fire,
Then an old stick is best because it is drier."

LOVE'S RETROSPECT

Looking across the fair green fields,

From this hill-top dear to me,
To the farthest stretch of the yellow beach,
What vision comes to me?

A lover bold and a maiden fair,
Sitting beside the sea.

His arm is round her slender waist;

He holds her small brown hand,

While one dear, little, shapely foot

Makes figures in the sand;

Oh, golden love! they are to-day

The happiest in the land.

I and my lover, tried and true,

Just twenty years ago,

Sat on this self-same yellow beach

And watched the swift tide flow;

My brown hair now is mixed with grey;

My true love's white as snow.

Yet love to us is just as sweet

As in the days of yore,

When wedding-bells the story told

Our little village o'er.

Ah, yes! as years roll on and on

We love each other more.

And now, oh, young and loving twain,

Whose path seems strewn with flowers,

We send a wish across the hills

Born of long, happy hours:

That love may be to your true hearts

What it has been to ours.

Gems

POWERFUL indeed is the empire of habit.
TRUTH is the highest thing that man may keep.

FORTUNE is not on the side of the faint-hearted.

Good company and good discourse are the very sinews of virtue.

FIND time still to be learning somewhat good, and give up being desultory.

THE brave man carves out his fortune, and every man is the son of his own works.

LOVE of truth shows itself in our knowing how to find and value the good in everything.

GREAT men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than any material force—that thoughts rule the world.

AN UNDESIRABLE QUALITY

Much unhappiness springs from self-consciousness, and the undue importance given mere emotions. The wallings over hopeless lives and lost lovers and blighted careers and unrealised ambitions go on forever, and we read of people cutting short their existence in an agony of misplaced self-pity! Of course all these romantic agonies are misreadings of the relative importance of the individual and the world. They spring from the great mistake of not realising one's personal unimportance and the transitory character of almost all disappointments. If people could be induced to look clearly and impartially at their own position in the midst of the world, at its greatness and interest and at their insignificance, a great deal of society's wasted feeling in sorrow and disappointment would be saved.

Let us look at the matter fairly. What right have we above all others to expect our ambition to be speedily gratified? What right have we to expect fame or happiness beyond the common share? Does not the world abound with cleverer and wiser and worthier persons? We are of limited importance, to ourselves and to the world. Even the greatest of men drop away from the front of life's march and are scarcely missed. Last year they may have had a power that could bear influence in every part of the world. This year they may be old gentlemen toddling about a garden in retirement. What, then, are we of the rank and file that we should set up as persons of consideration whose lot the world ought to understand and appreciate? The truth is that we are quite unimportant, and had much better feel our insignificant relation to the whole.

If we once fairly and squarely consider this question aright, we shall see that there is nothing worth striving for in this world in comparison with the common aims of being good men, clean of life, straight in our dealings, tender in our consideration for others, simple in our pleasures and hopes.

You cannot afford to waste time and attention on your own importance. Once begun to think too sedulously of that, and you will think of little else. It will warp your nature and spoil your manners. The man or woman who is possessed by a feeling of self-importance is never fully at ease, and never a really desirable companion, being quick to resent supposed slights, whereas the people who do not worry themselves with thoughts about themselves will be natural and dignified, with an unconscious elevation of spirit that makes their presence desired by all who know them.

LOVE'S LANGUAGE

"Do you love me, little maiden?"

Thus he asked so tenderly;

"What d'you think?" she answered softly,

"Look into my eyes and see."

And while looking did the lover

Perish in those depths of blue;

"All the world's well lost for loving

When one's me and t'other's you."

Gleanings

SEE KNEW THE METHODS.—The country editor had turned the personal column over to his daughter temporarily, while politics claimed his attention. The daughter had studied country editorial methods to some advantage, and the following items appeared: "Tom Jones called last evening with a two-pound box of candy. Call again, Tom." "Harry Mason was around with his trotter and sidebar buggy last week. Don't forget the number, Harry." "George Brown's billboard is said to be good for two seats for anything that comes. We always like to see George on show nights." "Miss Mary Martin, the milliner, has a magnificent display of the latest styles in her show window. How much is this good for, Mary?"

THE CARE OF CHILDREN'S EYES.—Children's eyes should be periodically examined during school life, and the process repeated year by year till mind and body have attained their full development. Paper and type used for school books should be carefully selected, the paper should be of dull finish, and the type equivalent to long primer. Rooms should be so flooded with light as to have sufficient illumination for reading on a dull day in the darkest corners. The distance of surrounding structures should be twice their height, and window surfaces should never fall below one square foot of glass for every five square feet of floor space. Pale green, grey, yellow, or blue for the prevailing tint of walls and furniture are advocated. The faulty construction of the school desk, which causes the pupil to bend unduly, is, says the author, no small factor in the increasing myopia of school life.

INCREASE OF GOLD.—Some interesting figures were lately given regarding the amount of gold contained in the Witwatersrand Mines, and in the Main Reef series of these mines. The estimate deals with the probable production down to a limit of 6,000 ft. Some of these figures are astounding. Prior to the war the average increase of production is stated at \$4,000,000 per annum, this amount dealing with a three years' period. In 1899 the production of gold was valued at \$19,000,000. The forecast is that by June, 1906, if the rate remains stable, the increase will amount to \$30,000,000 per annum. But it seems that with gold, as with coal, there is a limit to the productiveness of a field, and what our engineers call the "life" of the district, it is stated, will show a development ahead, and then comes decline and extinction. But it is at least assuring to those interested to learn that from the beginning of the present year the calculation gives a "life" of 42½ years.

KILLED TO MAKE POWDER PUFF.—Very little is known about these almost universal adjuncts to "my lady's" toilet-table, though so various are they in shape, size, and quality, that much might be written about them. As many as twenty thousand young swans—cygnets, as they are called—are killed every year to supply this dainty fluff, to say nothing of the innumerable young birds of the eider-duck and wild-geese kind. It is needless to say that the bulk of these are imported—the swans and geese from the islands of the Baltic and from Norway and Sweden, and the eiders from the northern and ice-bound seas. One cygnet will make nearly a dozen average-sized "puffs," which shows how many of our fair charms must be to a greater or less extent addicted to the use of powder. The puff trade is highly profitable, as may be judged from the fact that the down of a cygnet costs little more than a shilling, the poor creature being often plucked alive so that it may bear another crop, while the puffs are sold often at several shillings, nicely mounted in bone and blue or pink satin, which adjuncts amount to comparatively nothing.

AN AMERICAN INNOVATION.—Some enterprising London bootblacks have recently adopted what is regarded as an American innovation. This is the rag with which the final polish is given to shoes. Only the most enterprising of the boys have taken to this improvement, which they proudly describe as an importation from America. "I have often thought that there would be ample return for any man with the courage to establish bootblack rooms in London," said a New Yorker, "for at present there are no such conveniences to be enjoyed there. Situated in the right part of London, a boot-black room, in my opinion, would make a fortune for its proprietor. To-day the average Londoner who has been brought up with the idea of having his shoes cleaned by the chambermaid at home or a small boy in the street, has no conception of the comfort of the American boot-blackening methods."

IN ENGLISH STYLE.—Curious customs are started by the French in the endeavour to be like the English in some of their ways. For instance, among the middle classes, when a special dinner is given in the "English style," the length of dining-table is loaded with immense dishes, their shape and form each indicating their contents, in the same way as the rounded cover of a cheese dish, in the form of a cheese, tells its own story. One of these dishes will be butter coloured, and rounded knobs, representative of plain boiled potatoes, will ornament the cover; another of green and white will have raised cabbage leaves running over, while yet another is all in ridges, indicative of a bundle of asparagus. The wells of the dishes themselves are all treated in the same way, and the colouring, roughly speaking, is correct.

ADVICE TO THE SLEEPLESS.—If you fear a sleepless night, undress in the dark. Light stimulates and arouses the activities. Darkness is supposed to produce drowsiness. Put some chopped ice in a rubber bag and place it at the lower extremity of the spine. This is particularly quieting to the nerves. Do not use anything but a rubber bag, or you will merely have a damp cloth and rheumatism by morning. Do not use a pillow. Relax every muscle so far as it is possible. Sprawl over the bed with arms and legs stretched out. Take a sponge bath with tepid water just before going to bed. Lie on your face, instead of your back. That is the way babies sleep, and their methods are scarcely to be improved upon in this particular. All pressure is removed from the spine by this means, and a delicious feeling of restfulness ensues. Make up your mind that you won't keep awake long enough to hear someone come in to outline the next day's work. You will drop asleep immediately.

A WAITING CHANCE.—"There is a fortune waiting for some shrewd but honest man," said a bachelor, the other day. "I believe the makers of underclothing are in collusion with some of these matrimonial agencies. No matter what price I pay for my underclothing, the buttons are always coming off, and as I send all my washable clothes to a laundry—carelessness, I'll admit—they are never sewn on, and I have to resort to pins. All this is a gentle reminder that a fellow needs a wife, but I absolutely refuse to take the hint. Where is the fortune? Why, if some really honest man should go into the business of manufacturing underclothes, and make a speciality of having the buttons securely sewn on, he would reap a harvest compared with which the profits from a new brand of soap or a fake medicine would look like thirty cents. He could advertise his wares as the 'Bachelor's Underclothing.' He could have some such catchy legend as this, 'Our Buttons Never Come Off.' Let me tell you if such a thing ever is done you will find a gang of men down at the shop where the garments are sold, which will make a woman's bargain counter rush seem tame as a French duel."

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BLIND.—One of the interesting features of the Library of Congress, in the United States, is the department for the blind, where books and special accommodations are furnished. At frequent intervals readings, recitations, and music are given by prominent society folk for the benefit of the blind who visit the library. Prominent men and women take pleasure in setting aside a portion of their time to read to the afflicted, or to entertain them, and it is considered quite an honour to receive an invitation from the librarian.

UTILISATION OF THE EARTH'S INTERNAL HEAT.—An engineering problem which so far has remained one distinctly for the future is that of the utilisation of the internal heat of the earth. However, a scheme is now seriously proposed by Professor Hallock, of Columbia University, New York, and also by the Official Geologist for Pennsylvania, of the United States Geological Survey. The central idea is that deep borings should be made in the earth's surface, and that into these cold water should be admitted in such a way as to make it possible to utilise the hot water and high pressure steam produced. The great objection to this drawing of the earth's ancient store of thermal energy would be that her cooling and consequent shrinking would be accelerated. In other words, earthquakes would necessarily become more frequent and possibly more violent and destructive in their effects.

TO FIND THE MAGNETIC POLE.—Captain Amundsen, who leaves Norway in the spring at the head of an expedition to locate the magnetic Pole, is prepared to spend four years in the frozen North. The second half of that period, however, will, he expects, be occupied in the journey from Disco, on the west coast of Greenland, westwards for about seven hundred miles to the Behring Strait, which, if all goes well, will be reached after the break up of the summer ice in 1907. His little craft, the "Gjoa," 47 tons register, is fitted with a petroleum motor, and large quantities of oil are to be taken on board, not only for the purpose of driving it, but also for lighting, heating, and cooking. Part of Captain Amundsen's plan is to build a small observatory on Boothia Island, and here two men, with provisions for two years, will be left. It is hoped to find winter harbourage for the "Gjoa" herself further south, on King William Land, but communication with the observatory will, if possible, be maintained throughout.

LEAD-POISONING AND DRINKING WATER.—In connection with the danger of lead-poisoning by drinking water, Dr. Clowes, chemist to the London County Council, has conducted a series of experiments with a view to establishing the facts. He finds that large sheets of very pure commercial lead were not acted upon by distilled water in a vacuum, nor in an atmosphere of hydrogen; at any rate, the action, due probably to the last traces of oxygen, were infinitesimal. But supply waters always contain oxygen and also other gases. Of these gases oxygen, when alone present, attacks the lead worst; carbon dioxide has a very slight effect. The corrosion of the lead is hence primarily due to oxygen; the carbon dioxide acts in the second place by forming a carbonate with the oxide first produced. The action is rapid at first, and a white deposit is formed, while some lead passes in solution; the deposit is some hydroxycarbonate of variable composition. It has been suggested that the presence of bacteria was required to start the attack or would hasten it; but lead heated to redness corroded as quickly in water which had long been kept boiling as under ordinary conditions. These experiments demonstrated, however, the inhibitory influence of certain salts in water. When water is distilled with the aid of a glass condenser tube, some silicate passes into the distillate and this silicate protects the lead against corrosion.

EILEEN'S ROMANCE

By FLORENCE HODGKINSON

Author of "Vernon's Destiny," "Ivy's Peril," "Royal's Promise," etc., etc.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

In the prologue we are introduced to Lady Eileen Percy, who is alone in her boudoir, playing with her little son, when she is startled by the unceremonious entrance of a woman who turns out to be the first wife of her husband. The shock was too much for Lady Eileen, and although she lingered for some months, never recovered. Henceforward, John Percy, the millionaire is dead to the world, and only cares for the son she left behind her.

Lucey Courtenay is engaged to Alan Ernescliff, and both families heartily approve of the match. They are spending August at Boulogne. Among other visitors are Mr. Desmond and his two daughters, Maude and Eileen.

Bob Ernescliff has fallen desperately in love with Maude Desmond, and takes his friend Basil Courtenay into his confidence. While on the sands one morning Eileen strays beyond her depth, and is in danger of drowning, when Basil rescues her, an incident that has far-reaching effects for him.

Mr. Desmond has now become Lord Desmond, through the death of his father, and they have taken up their residence at Desmondville, Yorkshire. Maude Desmond does all she can to suppress her sister Eileen. Lord Desmond is too weak to interfere. There is living at the lodge at the gates of Desmondville a Mrs. Venn, who pays for the privilege, and it is evident has an object in so doing.

CHAPTER XIV.

ADAM GOLDSMITH left England with a light heart. True, he had before him a task of great difficulty; but had he not also the reward of May's approval to spur him on? Would it not have made more difficult things seem easy to him, to know that he, a plain, dull, middle-aged man, the wrong side of forty, had won the treasure coveted by the most eligible suitors in England—the priceless gift of May Delaval's love.

He had never even hoped for it. It had seemed to him his sad secret raised an impassable barrier between him and the one woman he cared for. He had never dreamed that an Earl's daughter would be content—aye, and pleased—to marry a man who, in the eyes of the law, had no real name of his own; but then May Delaval was not as other girls were, she was nobler and larger souled than most of fashion's daughters.

She had a heart, and having found that it had passed from her into Adam Goldsmith's keeping, she was too true to prevent her hand from following.

Adam knew that Lord Vivian was very fond of his nephew. That he regarded Basil Courtenay as one of whom any father might be proud. It seemed to the banker May's generous proposal would please all parties.

The Earl would have an heir after his own heart, and if Basil took his uncle's name the Delavals of Yorkshire would not be extinct.

Sir Bryan and his wife must be well content at the splendid position offered to their firstborn; while the girl, who voluntarily resigned her birthright and put another in her place, had told him she needed nothing but his love to make her happy. Indeed, the future looked fair enough. His own enormous wealth would have surrounded May with every luxury had she come to him penniless; but her godfather's legacy, which she must still retain, was in itself a fortune. No wonder the future looked fair to Adam as he journeyed to Africa.

Disappointment awaited him. He soon fell in with an old acquaintance, who told him Cyril Westwood had left the place after a very brief sojourn, and gone to the south of France; he meant to travel from one health resort to another, and might even go for a cruise with a friend whose yacht lay off Marseilles, and who talked of sailing to Australia.

"Surely he was not ill!" observed Adam, gravely; "he seemed to me in perfect health. Why should he want to make a tour of foreign health resorts?"

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"He looked well enough; but I'll tell you one thing ailed him, Goldsmith, his temper. I never saw a fellow so miserably changed. He could hardly be with you for two minutes without snapping your head off. I was very glad, for my part, when he took his departure."

The banker travelled back to Marseilles. Here letters reached him from May Delaval. He had heard from her before, for more than a week had passed since he left England before he fell in with his talkative acquaintance, and so left Algiers; but this letter struck him with a strange fear.

May had lost her bright hopefulness. She wrote evidently in bad spirits, and seemed out of gear.

Dorothy was no better. The quiet of Vivian Court had produced no favourable change. She grew paler and thinner day by day, and May trembled for the result if help did not soon come.

"She is still under that hateful power," wrote Adam's fiancée; "by night she cannot rest, but seems always imploring mercy of some unseen tyrant, while by day she is just a frail, shadowy little creature whom one fears a rough breeze might blow away. I can see no hope. Dr. Macdonald has been down, and seems anxious about her. He says something must be done soon or she will die. To my mind there is but one thing to do. To break the awful spell; but how to set about it I cannot tell. And I am troubled about other things."

"Basil, whom I deemed the soul of truth and honour. Basil, whom I trusted as myself, instead of being true to my poor little Eileen, had engaged himself to a Blankshire heiress, and my little friend is dying. I cannot go to her. I actually dare not leave Dorothy unprotected, lest by some strange chance Maude Desmond should appear in my absence; but I feel torn in pieces."

"If Eileen dies I shall always feel we have killed her. It was I who brought her from her happy, safe obscurity, and threw her into Basil's society. When I think of Dorothy lying here as it were fading away through a cruel treachery, and Eileen dying of a broken heart, it seems to me there must be something terribly wrong somewhere in this life of ours that such things can be."

The letter ended with a few affectionate words to himself—words of gratitude for his love, and for the search he was even then conducting.

The letter had certainly troubled May's ambassador, but it had done something else. It had made his course quite clear.

Cyril Westwood once found, there must be no dallying, no ceremonious delay; whatever the consequences, he must go straight to the point at once.

He had got thus far in his musings when the waiter opened the door of his private sitting-room, and presented him with a card.

It seemed to Adam fate itself must be interfering in Dorothy's favour. Here was the name of the very man he had come to seek. Cyril Westwood was actually calling on him.

He came in with a worn, jaded look on his face, as one who had traversed many miles, and wearied himself in journeying without deriving exercise, pleasure, or benefit. Thinner and graver than when Goldsmith had seen him last, and with a strange, hopeless look in his eyes, as though nothing could make him glad or sorry.

"I knew you were stopping here," he said, when the first greetings had been exchanged, "so I thought I would look you up. I don't suppose you'll stay long; there's nothing worth looking at. I leave myself to-morrow."

"Where are you going?"

"New Zealand, India, anywhere—it doesn't matter! I've hired a yacht, and mean to cruise about." I suppose it's no use asking you to join me?"

"No. I must return to England as soon as possible. I want to persuade you to come with me?"

Westwood shook his head with a sneer.

"No use, my good fellow! England and I have parted company for a good while to come. I think, myself, our native land vastly overpraised. What has she to offer us but worn-out traditions, phantom fortunes, and women falselier than a poet's dream?"

"I can't allow that last! I am engaged to be married. It's a secret as yet, but I don't mind telling you. My fiancée is one of the truest hearts Heaven ever made, and for her sake I won't hear you speak against her sex!"

"You are richer than most men, so it's likely she'll keep her word," said Westwood, bitterly; "but it will be your gold that keeps her faithful; nothing else, depend upon it. And so you're going home to be married. Is the day fixed?"

"I have not even spoken to her father yet."

"My dear fellow, you aren't doing things at all in an orthodox manner, I can tell you that. If you must come touring over Europe just after arranging to be a benedict, let me inform you you ought to have settled everything in due form first. Pin-money, jointure, wedding-day, honeymoon, route. So much you should have got all cut and dried; then, if you chose to run over here while your bride-elect was busy with the milliners, etc., no one could blame you."

"As it happens, I am here at her request. When I asked May Delaval to be my wife, I undertook a mission she could not execute herself; and we both understood that till it was fulfilled our own future must not be discussed, or thought of."

"May Delaval!" Westwood's tone had grown a little less cynical. "Well, I don't think you've done badly after all! She has opinions of her own, and is a trifle masterful; but I begin to think women with masculine brains are more to be trusted than those sweet, childish-looking creatures we worship blindly till, like cats, they unsheath their claws and wound us."

"I am much obliged for your good opinion of my choice. I do not think my fiancée masculine. I can only tell you I am counting the hours until I can get back to her!"

"Then why in the world don't you go?"

"I shall not go to May until I can tell her I have fulfilled her trust. I am not going to prove myself unable to perform the only thing she ever asked me to do!"

"What was it?" asked Westwood, carelessly. "I don't think she cares for pearls; and she does not go in for botany or collecting rare animals. What remarkable thing was it you promised to take back to her?"

"Cyril Westwood!"

The person spoken to looked so bewildered that Adam Goldsmith hurried on:

"I cannot help it, even if I offend you; if I appear to you both interfering and presumptuous. I left England in search of you. I was directed here from Algiers, but could find no trace of you. I was well-nigh in despair when your card was brought to me."

"I have only seen your fiancée once," said Westwood, slowly. "What could she want me for?"

"If only the case were not so urgent," said the older man, "I would not have burst on you with my request in this strange manner; but every day, nay, every hour, is of consequence. One whom May Delaval loves as a sister lies dying! It seems to us—to May and myself—that you might save her!"

He was not prepared for the effect of his words; strong man as he was, Cyril Westwood staggered, and would have fallen had he not clutched wildly at the table for support.



CYRIL WESTWOOD'S RETURN—A RAY OF HOPE.

"Dying?"
"We fear so!" Then, though he knew the words were unnecessary, "I speak of Dorothy Courtenay."

"She deserves it!" broke from Westwood, impatiently. "Did she not win my heart and toss it away like a broken toy? But dying! Dolly dying? Why, I would give my life for hers!"

"We cannot start before to-night's train," said Goldsmith, quietly. "Even if you consent to accompany me, there must be so much delay. Westwood, don't think me inquisitive, more depends on it than you know. I want you to tell me what separated you from Dorothy Courtenay."

"What separated us?" cried Cyril, wildly. "Her own deed, of course. I had loved her all her life. I was but waiting an opportunity to ask her to be my wife, when, the night of her sister's wedding-day, I had a note from her, telling me not to think any more of our childish intimacy (childish, indeed! I am nearly thirty), she could never be mine, her heart had been won by a nobler suitor, and I must think of her only as my little friend!"

"When did she give you this letter?"
"I found it on my dressing-table when I went to bed. Dorothy herself had retired early on the plea of a headache."

"And you believed it?"
"Of course I believed it. I had known Dorothy's writing from her childhood, had seen it in all its changes. It is a peculiar hand, one that it would be impossible to imitate. I knew, even if they had had any object in the forgery, no human creature but Dorothy Courtenay could have written the letter I received."

Everything was clear to Adam Goldsmith.
"And you even think Miss Courtenay possessed of a strong will?"

"It's no use your pretending she was made to write that letter," said Cyril, decidedly. "Her parents were on my side."

"She was made to write it, poor child!" said Adam, speaking with great feeling. "Made to write it by a power so unscrupulous and so cruel that while her hand traced every word of the letter that hurt you, she had not the faintest idea of their purport!"

Westwood looked incredulous.

"I don't believe it!"

"Softly! I must tell you the truth, but forgive me if I wound you in the telling. You have a cousin, Maude Desmond, whose home for years has been chiefly with your mother. Had you any idea how these ladies spent their time in London?"

"I never visited them there. Stay, though. I called once in Brompton, but I have no special remembrance of it."

"Mrs. Westwood and her niece—though I believe not in their own names—have for years earned a handsome income by their mesmeric cures. Their fees are enormous, and so highly trained are their powers in this strange and mysterious science that at times they have relieved patients who had been years under the ablest physicians. The gift seems to have been hereditary among the females of your mother's family."

Cyril groaned.

"That was what my father meant, then, when he thanked God he had no daughter, when, child as I was at the time of his death, he warned me with his last breath never to marry my cousin Maude."

"Don't you see, Westwood, the power, employed for evil, might, in unscrupulous hands, have fearful results? Miss Desmond meant to marry you, so—"

"I never in my life gave her cause to think I cared for her other than as for a sister."

"That makes no difference. She cared for you. That poor child at Courtenay Hall stood between you. If only she could bring about a misunderstanding between you and Miss Courtenay before you were definitely engaged,

when the poor child would be powerless to demand an explanation, the game was won."

"It is a terrible charge," said Westwood slowly; "besides, how do you explain that letter? I would give worlds to believe Dorothy did not write it, but I tell you every word is her own!"

"Dorothy wrote it!" said Adam gravely; "but when she wrote it, she was so completely a victim to hypnotism that her hand traced whatever your cousin commanded, without her intellect grasping what she wrote."

"And what is hypnotism?"

"It is one will so completely paralysed by the force of a stronger will that the poor victim is utterly unconscious of all that happens."

"But this is terrible!"

"There have been cases known," went on Goldsmith pitilessly, "of murders committed in this state, and of suicide; the power once established, it is almost impossible to break it."

"But how did you suspect it?"

"After you had left Courtenay Hall with such scant courtesy, Miss Desmond became a guest there. She infatuated the whole family except Basil and his cousin. Dorothy in particular seemed marvellously taken with her; but as the days wore on the girl's health began to fail. She grew thin and pale, was always tired, and yet when questioned, declared she slept soundly the whole night through. She seemed to her cousin, though still much with Miss Desmond, to have acquired a nameless fear of her. It was a terrible time for May; her uncle and aunt believing their child was pining at your desertion, and their pride in arms, would not see how ill she was. And at last Lady May took the matter into her own hands, and carried off her cousin while the family were absent at some festive gathering."

"I met them at Waterloo, and I was horrified at the sight of Miss Courtenay. I had expected to meet a beautiful girl in the pride of youth and health. I saw a feeble, fragile

creature, who seemed to be smitten by some dire disease. That very night her cousin told me all. Her fears had not then taken a very distinct shape; but she believed Miss Desmond had gained such an influence over Dorothy that the poor girl was actually afraid of her. She asked me could such things be? I told her there was no limiting the influence of mesmerism. Lord Vivian is an old College friend of my own. Entrusted by Lady May with the task of telling him my fears, I found he had been converted from his scepticism of mesmerism by the evidence of some wonderful cures worked by two ladies well known to him. He did not then mention their names. That very night both May Delaval and an old nurse kept watch, and they found poor Dorothy talking in her sleep, and imploring some unseen person to give her back a letter. The case is quite clear to me. By day the poor child knows nothing save that you have forsaken her; but at night a vague memory comes to her of writing something which she connects in some way with your estrangement. She seems to see her tyrant, and implore her to give back the paper. Macdonald, who is one of the most skillful men I know, declares that unless the strain on her brain is removed he will not answer for her life, and declares he cannot go to Maude Desmond and charge her with her perfidy. He has no proof a lawyer would accept. Besides, Dorothy is still under her influence. For the child's own sake, we can do nothing against her tyrant till the spell is broken."

Cyril Westwood trembled.

"Can anything break the spell against her—Miss Desmond's—will?"

"Only two things: death, which would give, of course, freedom to her victim; or the introduction of a stronger influence. We both believe, May Delaval and myself, that love for you is the master passion of Dorothy Courtenay's life; we believe that your voice, and yours alone, could break the bonds that hold her, and restore her to herself. But, Mr. Westwood, she shall not be called back, as it were, from the brink of the grave, only to endure more sufferings. Unless you are willing to accept our theory of the letter in her handwriting, and will cherish her all her days, do not come to the Court with me. Better that the poor child should sink into an early grave than that she should recover to face again the cruel coldness and bitter neglect which first shattered her health."

"And you could think that of me?"

"I do not want to be hard on you," replied the banker; "but remember, I have seen her, I know in a measure what she has suffered, and I will not be the means of taking you to her, unless I feel you will be true to her."

"I was never anything else," said Westwood, brokenly; "even when I thought her false, I loved her. Mr. Goldsmith, only take me to Dorothy, and rest assured I will never leave her; I will stay at Vivian Court until she can leave it as my wife, or," and his voice quivered, "until they take all that is mortal of her from me, to put it to rest in the silence of the grave. But oh! to think of what she has suffered, to remember how I have been tricked! I tell you, when I think of Maude Desmond's part in it, I almost forget she is a woman in my longing for vengeance on her."

"Hush!" said the man whose youth had been crushed and disciplined by a secret sorrow. "Do not speak of vengeance; pray rather that we may get there in time."

"Is it so bad as that?"

Goldsmith shook his head.

"May wrote of her cousin as 'much worse.' If you had seen her as I did a fortnight ago, you would wonder, as I do, how anyone can be much worse than that, and yet alive."

Cyril shivered.

"We shall meet again," he said, with a tone of quiet conviction. "It may be we shall only have time to say 'good-bye.' But Heaven, which is merciful, and which suffered us to love each other, will not take away my dar-

ling until I have told her my heart was true to her through all, and she has whispered back that she forgives me."

"And you will come with me?"

"Of course. Couldn't we start before to-night. Oh, Goldsmith, you can't understand the agony the delay will be to me, and these miserable crawling French trains! I feel in a fever at the thought of their slowness."

"Be thankful you came here to-day, and that I had not to seek you out; we can feel at least that there has been really no time lost; had you met me on my arrival we could not have left for England sooner."

"And when shall we be there? Lose not a moment, and, Goldsmith, can't money do something? Surely it ought to effect a few hours difference in the time of our journey?"

"I will telegraph to King's Cross for a special train to Whitby, to be in readiness whatever time we arrive on Thursday morning," said the banker, thoughtfully; "but I see nothing more to do. We shall be there by Thursday night at latest, just a week after the date of May's letter."

"A week!" Cyril's face turned pale at the thought of the delay, and all that might have happened in it, but Adam Goldsmith had a ray of comfort for him.

"No," said the banker, gently; "you need not fear that; she is still alive, or May would have telegraphed to me."

"Will you not send word we are coming?"

"I think not."

"Why not?"

"We cannot tell with any certainty the precise hour of our arrival. Think of May's own suspense. Besides, Westwood, depend upon it, sudden joy does not kill. If only you are with her, Dorothy Courtenay will never wonder how you came there."

They travelled with the utmost speed money could procure; but, alas! it seemed very tedious to poor Cyril's anxious mind. If he could only have put the wings of his impatience to the flagging engine! Each delay was absolute torture to him, and, but for Goldsmith's entreaties, he would not have attempted to take food.

"You must eat and drink," said his mentor, firmly. "Remember, if you present yourself before Miss Courtenay haggard and exhausted, in her weak state you may give her a terrible shock."

Westwood groaned.

"I never saw anything like these foreign trains. They simply crawl along!"

It was a relief to his companion when they were on board the steamer, and Cyril could walk off some of his restlessness by pacing to and fro, instead of chafing in his seat like some wild beast in a cage all too small for it.

Many of the passengers wondered what trouble had befallen the handsome stranger, who seemed possessed with such a feverish anxiety for the vessel's reaching Dover, and who, whenever he was not gazing listlessly on the water, was engaged in abstruse calculations in "Bradshaw."

"Courage," whispered Goldsmith, as they took their places in the London train. "The worst part of the journey is over."

As they passed through Park Lane, driving from Victoria to King's Cross, Mr. Goldsmith insisted on stopping at Lord Vivian's house. In vain Cyril fumed; his friend declared he might go on without him if he pleased, but he himself would at least hear what bulletins had reached the Earl's London house.

He was barely two minutes away, and when he returned his face was so grave and troubled that poor Cyril jumped to the conclusion they were too late.

"It's no use going on," he said, gloomily. "I could not face them now. We have killed her between us—my precious cousin and myself."

"She is not dead," said Goldsmith, gravely. "But Sir Bryan and Lady Constance have been sent for. They passed through London on their way to the Court yesterday. Basil

Courtenay is already there, and, but for her husband's illness, which still detains them abroad, Lady Vivian would also be with her now."

"And she is alive?"

"Yesterday's message said, 'Sinking fast.' Macdonald went down last night. My poor fellow, take comfort; we may be too late to save her, but I think you will be in time to see her once again."

"Once again," retorted Cyril, bitterly, "when but for that she-fiend, we should have had our lives to spend together! Once again! When I have loved her for fifteen years, and for nine of them have looked forward to the day when she should be my wife. Of course, you can talk calmly. You don't know what it is!"

It said much for Adam's forbearance that he never told his excited companion he owed even this "once again" to him.

It told of what he had suffered himself, that he was patient enough not to remind Cyril of how he had played into Maude Desmond's hands.

Maidenly modesty, the shrinking fear of seeming to woo instead of waiting to be wooed, had closed Dorothy's lips, and made it impossible for her to demand an explanation of her lover's strange, abrupt departure; but nothing in the world prevented Cyril, after her letter, either demanding of herself the name of his noble rival, or telling Sir Bryan he left the Court because Dorothy would not smile on him.

In his pride—his miserable, jealous pride—he had left silent, while a word from him would have smoothed away all difficulties, and broken down for ever the barrier which Maude had so craftily reared between him and Dorothy.

But Adam Goldsmith was too merciful to remind his friend of this. He seemed, indeed, to be only anxious to soothe and console the man who showed him such scant gratitude.

"I telegraphed for a carriage and pair," he observed as they neared Whitby Station. "In another hour you will be there."

The arrival of the special train caused quite a little sensation. Goldsmith's valet lingered to see after the luggage, but the two friends drove off at once at a gallop.

"What am I to say to them?" demanded Cyril, when they had dashed through the lodge-gates, and the man had shaken his head and answered their questions about Miss Courtenay with the one word, "Dying."

"How am I to face them?" he repeated. "Her father and mother, who loved and trusted me as a son. How can I face them when I have killed their child?"

"They won't think of that now," said Goldsmith, gently. "Only, pray control yourself, or you will never be allowed to see her."

"I will see her! No one shall prevent me! Is she not my own, living or dead?"

"And, Westwood, remember, not a word about your cousin's share in this. Dorothy's parents know nothing; need never know anything of our suspicions. For their sake do not let them guess all the poor child has suffered."

Late as it was, Vivian Court was brilliantly illuminated. There were lights in many windows, and servants flitted to and fro through all with a strange, hushed footstep, as though the angel of death, whose grim presence hovered near, had already cast his awe upon them.

Basil Courtenay was in the hall. He wrung Goldsmith's hand, but turned away as though he did not see the one which Cyril extended.

"I knew you would come," he said to the banker. "Only I feared it would be too late; but May's faith never failed. She has said all day you would be here to-night, and the moment we heard wheels she sent me to see if it was you."

"How is she?"

No need to ask whom. Basil gave an agni-

glance at Cyril Westwood, and took no pains to soften his answer.

"Dying fast. There is no one with her but May and the nurse. It is too painful; she goes in and out, and the others wait in the drawing-room for her reports. We need never boast of our courage again," he added, bitterly, "since we are all too cowardly to bear and see what she has to suffer!"

"Where is she?"

"In May's boudoir."

As one who knew the house well Goldsmith turned in his direction, up the broad, oaken staircase, past the room where a woman's sob told him the heartbroken parents waited; on to where heavy velvet curtains had been pushed back to disclose a door nearly shut. He pushed it open, and went in, Cyril in his wake.

On a couch near the fire lay the girl her lover had last seen in the zenith of her beauty and her loveliness; not two months had passed since Lucy's wedding-day, but what havoc they had made in her sister's face, pale as marble, the golden-brown hair looking unnaturally bright from its contrast; and the eyes, the soft, tender grey eyes, had a look of great uneasiness, of some yearning, unfulfilled desire.

As she raised them and looked eagerly round the room, not seeming to see either her weeping cousin, or the kind old nurse, too weak to move herself from the sofa, it was evident the old fear was on her, for with one convulsive effort she lifted herself to a sitting attitude, folded her thin hands together, and with her sweet, weak voice, prayed—

"Give me back my letter! I did not know that it would vex him. . . Oh, give it me back and let me rest!"

May Delaval felt rather than saw her lover enter.

As he took her hand and held it fast in his, the strangest sense of confidence and protection soothed her troubled spirit. She could not speak; a lump rose in her throat, and choked back her words. She could only kneel there by Dorothy's sofa and wail—she hardly understood for what.

She knew that the man who looked at her cousin with such an agonising, remorseful tenderness was Cyril Westwood. She understood, without being told, that he had been as cruelly dealt by as Dorothy herself, but his conduct puzzled her.

He never spoke a word of greeting or endearment; he never offered a caress; he only seemed searching in his pocket. And when the heart-rending cry came for the second time, he took a folded paper and placed it silently in the lap of the dying girl.

She did not seem to see him do it.

May, who had been with her cousin throughout her illness, knew that when in this strange state of sleep-walking (or, rather sleep-waking, since she was now too feeble to walk, poor child!), Dorothy never did seem to see anything around her; but the thin fingers presently took up the paper, opened it, and held it towards the lamp, evidently to satisfy herself of its contents. Then a strange look of rapturous happiness crossed the poor, wasted face. With stifled, feverish strength, she tossed the letter in to the fire, and then, in her own natural voice murmured, "I can sleep now," let her head fall back on the pillow, and seemed to pass at once into refreshing slumber.

"She is dead," said Westwood, bitterly, thinking only of the closed eyes; "I have come too late."

Dr. Macdonald, who had entered unperceived, shook his head.

"She is asleep," he declared, positively, "the first natural sleep she has had for weeks. I dare not speak too positively, but I think now you may venture to hope."

"Is the spell broken?" asked May.

"I cannot tell that yet. Mr. Westwood must not leave the room, indeed, he should, if possible, stay here until she wakes. If she

recognises him—as I hope she will—he must at once assure her nothing has changed her in his opinion. I do not often advocate deceit, but in this case the patient's one chance is for her to believe all her fears and terrors utterly unfounded, and I confess I see now a slight hope."

"Thank Heaven!" cried Cyril, fervently.

"All will depend on her awakening," went on Dr. Macdonald; "and now, Lady May, let me beg of you to go and lie down, indeed, you will break down entirely if you do not get some rest. Mrs. Parkins will watch by your cousin, and, indeed, she will need nothing, I think, for some hours."

Adam Goldsmith joined his entreaties and May reluctantly left the boudoir. She was going towards her own chamber, when in a little ante-room she saw her cousin Basil standing with such a look of misery on his face that she forgot her own fatigue in her desire to comfort him.

"Dorothy is better, Basil; they think now she may live."

"I know; Goldsmith has just told me."

"And yet you look more miserable instead of being comforted."

"I am not thinking of Dorothy, but of myself. It is cruel of me to trouble you when you are nearly worn out; but, oh, May, I must speak to someone or I shall go mad."

May's answer was to sink into a chair—she felt that stand much longer she could not—and assure Basil she was ready to hear him.

"I did not mean to seem hard and cold to you," she said, kindly; "it was an awful blow to me when I heard you were engaged to Laura Peyton, for I loved Eileen so dearly, and I thought I could have made papa get your parents to agree to it; but we must not quarrel now when Dorothy is so ill, and I will listen to you as readily as though you had not forsaken Eileen. It can't hurt her now," went on May, with a kind of choked sob, "for they buried her to-day; all my Eileen's pain and suffering, all her troubles, are over now for ever."

"I know," said Basil, brokenly. "I met the funeral as I was coming here. It was the first idea I had of her being gone."

His voice had a kind of sob, and May said, gently—

"Then you did care for her a little?"

"I cared for her as my life's best love. When her letter came asking for her freedom, I was nearly beside myself. I proposed to Laura Peyton two days later out of pique, but I never ceased from loving Eileen. I simply could not!"

"I don't understand," said May, bewildered.

"You say Eileen broke the engagement?"

"I thought so till to-night. Macdonald has just told me of the cruel influence that has nearly taken my sister's life. May, can't you guess what I am thinking?"

"They were only half-sisters," said May, mistaking his meaning, "and Maude's strange mesmeric gifts came from her mother. Little Eileen was incapable of using such spells."

"You mistake me. Maude hated her sister. It seems, too, there was a man here who wanted to marry Eileen—a kind of gentleman money-lender, who had some secret of Tom Desmond's in his power. Oh, May, can't you see what I mean? Not content with persecuting the poor girl to give me up, Maude Desmond may have been the author of that letter to me; she may, indeed, have written it in her own character, since I never saw her writing or Eileen's, and so could have no suspicions. Or she may," his voice trembled, "have used the same cruel power that made Dorothy her victim."

May shivered.

"And the letter?"

"I never doubted it was from Eileen. She asked me to send back the flowers she gave me as a love token. How did anyone but herself know of its existence?"

"And you sent it?"

"With one single line, 'Let all be forgotten.' I am not sure those were the exact words."

"And it is too late," said May, in a strange, dreamy sort of voice. "Dolly may be restored to us, but Eileen has died believing you false. Oh, Basil, when I think of all the evil Maude Desmond has wrought in two months, I am terrified. It seems to me dangerous for her fellow-creatures that such a creature should live!"

"And Laura?" broke in Basil, impetuously.

"What is to be done about her?"

"You must marry her."

"I cannot," declared poor Basil. "I never cared about her. You will be ashamed of me I know, May, but I only proposed to her out of pique. I wanted to show Eileen someone else could appreciate me if she did not."

"But you can't punish Miss Peyton because you have made a mistake. You must marry her, Basil. Recollect your word is pledged to her!"

"It was pledged to Eileen first."

"But Eileen has been taken."

"You need not remind me of that! Oh, May, when I saw her funeral it nearly killed me!"

"How did you know it was hers?"

"That extraordinary old woman at Lord Desmond's lodge was following the procession. She came to a dead stop when she saw me, and made the most peculiar speech."

"I hear she nursed Eileen as though she had been her own child. What did she say?"

"Ah, young man, you may look. Looking won't undo the past. This is Eileen Desmond's funeral, and if you think you've had a hand in bringing her to her grave I quite agree with you. She was a sweet creature, and much too good for this world, or the people in it!"

(To be concluded next week.)

This story commenced in No. 2,055. Each number can be obtained through all News-agents.

USEFUL HINTS.

In ironing handkerchiefs it is useful to remember that the middle should be ironed first; to iron the edges first causes the middle to swell out like a balloon, and makes it difficult to iron satisfactorily. Test the iron carefully before using it; a piece of rag should be at hand for this purpose.

It is said that the wick of a lamp, if frayed out to about an inch at the end which is immersed, will give a much brighter and stronger flame.

If your window glass is lacking in brilliancy, clean it with liquid paste made of alcohol and whiting. A little of this mixture will remove specks and impart a high lustre to the glass.

When doors do not close snugly, but leave cracks through which draughts enter, the simplest remedy is this: Place a strip of putty along the jambs, cover the edge of the door with chalk, and shut it. The putty will then fill all spaces. The chalk rubbed on the edges prevents adhesion, and the putty is left in place, where it soon dries and leaves a perfectly fitting jamb.

COMPLETELY STAMPED OUT.—There is no hydrophobia in England or Australia. This happy state of affairs has been brought about by medical science and legislation combined. One of the fundamental principles of rabies is that no animal can contract the disease unless it comes in contact with another animal afflicted with it. It does not develop in an animal from any circumstances of nature, but is transmitted from one to another by contact. In England and Australia the disease was first completely stamped out by drastic measures, and then legislation was called into service to regulate the importation of canines. If a tourist desires to take a pet dog into England the animal is quarantined for several days, during which it is examined by experts. This is to ascertain if the animal has rabies, and accounts for the fact that rabies is so rare.

HEIRLOOMS OF FAMOUS FAMILIES

Whether the fortunes of a family are in any way influenced by the safety of its heirloom or not it is difficult to decide, but it is worthy of note that many of the most famous houses have declined vast fortunes for trifling articles which have been bequeathed from generation to generation for centuries past.

One of the most remarkable heirlooms is the "Coalstoun Pear," which, as a talisman, formed part of the dowry of the daughter of Baron Coalstoun three centuries back, and is still preserved in a silver casket. It was said that as long as the fruit remained intact the fortunes of the family would be upheld, but at the close of the eighteenth century the wife of the contemporary owner bit it with her teeth, whereupon much of the Coalstoun property came into the market. The pear then passed into the keeping of the Countess of Delhousie, and has long since reached a state of petrification.

The fortunes of at least four families of renown are vested with vases or cups. "The Luck of Edenhall" is a glass goblet owned by the Musgrave family, and, according to the legend, was left by the fairies at St. Cuthbert's well, in the grounds of the hall, many centuries ago. It is of flawless crystal, and has since been rigorously guarded. Vast sums have been offered for it by many of the celebrities who have come from all parts of the world to examine it, though they have been unhesitatingly declined.

Another famous heirloom is the cup of the Muncaster family, which was used by Henry VI. when he was sheltered by Sir John Pennington from his pursuers in 1461. During the civil war it was hidden in a box, which was one day dropped by a careless servant, and so great was the family superstition that for upwards of fifty years no one dared open the box to see if the cup was broken, but when this was done at the end of the sixteenth century the cup was found to be minus not even a chip. A gold goblet encrusted with precious stones is also the talisman of Lord Otway's family, and is kept fastened to the dining-room table with a chain of gold.

The Portland vase, although now in the gold ornament room of the British Museum, belongs to the Duke of Portland, and is the heirloom of the family. It is of glass, resembling onyx, and of Grecian workmanship, standing 9½ in. in height by 2½ in. in circumference. It was purchased by the Duke of Portland in 1786 for 1,029 guineas, and, for the sake of safety, deposited twenty-four years later in the museum. In 1845 a fanatic named Loyd deliberately smashed it with a stone; but as the Duke declined to prosecute the culprit he could only be fined £5 for breaking the glass of the case in which it reposed. The vase has since been placed together, and is valued at £11,000.

A woman's hand is the curious heirloom of the De Fleydeau family, one of the most famous houses in the French aristocracy, and now headed by the Comte de Fleydeau. On legendary evidence, it is said that in 1393 the family castle surrendered to the King after a siege of three years, and, in order that the inmates should have their lives spared, the countess—the most beautiful woman in France—submitted to having her right hand cut off. The gruesome relic, in a mummified condition, is still preserved in a gold casket at the family mansion on the Gironde, and, needless to add, is kept proof against thieves, since the fortunes of the owners are fully believed to depend upon it.

Perhaps the most celebrated family heirloom is the Lee penny, which has been in possession of the Lockharts, of Lee, in Lanarkshire, since the Crusades. It is a silver coin, and formed part of the ransom paid for a Saracen chief, but its value mainly depends on the fact that it is supposed to be capable

of curing any ailment, and for this purpose was hired in 1665 by a plague-stricken town in exchange for securities of £25,000. To-day the penny is just as jealously guarded by the present head of the family, Sir Simon Lockhart, as it has been by his ancestors before him.

THE ROBIN'S RAIN SONG

There are silver pools in the garden walks,
And diamond drops in the bower;
And the young green leaves and the withered stalks

Are drenched in the crystal shower.
At the purple plumes of the lilac spray
I gaze through a jewelled pane,
Where a robin sitteth the livelong day,
And singeth a song of rain.

To the farmer driving his oxen by
He sings of the harvest yield,
Of the corn, and the wheat, and the haystack high,
And the cows in the daisied field;
But to me, who gaze through a mist of tears,
A sad and a sweet refrain,
Set to the tune of the bygone years,
Is the robin's song in the rain.

For the gate is oped by the lilac bush,
And a fair little maid comes through,
And stops to hear, in the twilight hush,
Just as I used to do.
I can see the gleam of the golden hair,
And the neck in its slender chain,
And the dainty skirt that she lifts with care
From the long grass wet with the rain.

The gate long since to the flame was fed,
And the lilac tree has grown,
And the little maid is dead, as dead
As if under a churchyard stone.
For here in her place is a woman old,
Who thinks that she sees again
The rosy face and the locks of gold,
When the robin sings in the rain.

SHARING ALIKE.—A tourist coach was travelling in the West Highlands, and it was observed among the passengers that first, second, and third-class ticket-holders were sharing alike, and there was a feeling of discontent growing among them, and complaints were being made to the man in attendance. But a steep hill to climb was reached, and things were put to rights again when the driver cried out:

"First-class passengers keep your seats, second-class passengers get out and walk, third-class passengers get out and shove."

SUN DIALS.—An interesting reminder of days long dead is the sun dial. It has marked the passage of time, which it has defied. And now that its day is done, its part in the world long since played out, still it stands, scarred and useless, but with a value and charm all its own. Numerous sun dials may still be seen in the British islands and on the Continent. Those in America were built because of their picturesqueness, not because they were a necessity. Many of the old sun dials are inscribed with quaint mottoes. A collection of these would be interesting. Some dials are in the shape of a cross, their mottoes usually expressing a religious sentiment. There are sun dials in Ireland said to date from the seventh and eighth centuries. Some of these are of a peculiar form, being flat, vertical slabs of a stone set up in ancient graveyards. It is probable that they were used to mark the canonical hours of prayer, and in this respect remind us of those to be seen in Mohammedan mosques. Watches were introduced into England from Germany in 1854, and from that time sun dials began to fall into disuse. But though the sun dial is no longer a necessity, we value it as an interesting memento of a younger civilisation, a reminder of a happy time, when, if there was less knowledge and skill in the world, life was simpler and more poetical than it is nowadays.

Confined Indoors for Nine Years

A WOMAN'S ACUTE SUFFERING

BILE BEANS COMPLETELY CURE HER

INDIGESTION, RHEUMATISM, AND WEAKNESS ENDED

Miracles are said not to occur now-a-days, but this case—proved, vouched for, by neighbours—reads very like one. Mrs. Susan Hartness, the subject, lives at 76½, Kirk Street, Clifton, Glasgow, and here is her story:—"For nine long years prior to last February I was not able to go out of my house! This was due to various illnesses and ailments, but right down at the bottom of them all, and causing them all, was chronic indigestion. This weakened and debilitated my whole system and various evils resulted. My boy then was just turned nine, and about a week after he was born I began to have terrible pains in my back and chest. As time went on and I grew no better I became alarmed. I could not digest what food I took, was sick, weak, and dizzy, and it really seemed actual torture for me to drag myself about. Housework was out of the question!

Then bilious attacks began to come on, and day after day I would be in a condition of utter helplessness. I was unable to sleep at night, but often during the day a kind of stupor would creep over me.

Added to my pain from these various ailments I then began to suffer from rheumatism. Once the body gets run down it is really surprising how many ills steal in!

For years I suffered. At times I was under doctor's treatment, and from one medical man I had sixteen bottles of medicine without getting any benefit. Things went on in this way until I tried Chas. Forde's Bile Beans.

I had only been taking them a comparatively short time when I felt that I could breathe more easily, and my limbs were becoming more pliable, as it were. I continued with the course, and the change has really been so great that I can hardly explain it.

I am like a different woman; I no longer suffer from indigestion, but am always hungry at meal times. I sleep well, can walk as briskly as before I fell ill, and my flesh has become firm. Any of my neighbours will tell you what Bile Beans have done for me!

Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are a certain cure for indigestion, biliousness, headache, debility, congestion of the liver, neuralgia, fainting fits, attacks of dizziness, flatulence, pains in the chest, loins or back, defective secretion of the bile, wasting affections, female irregularities, rheumatism, constipation, and piles.

Obtainable from all chemists or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Company, Red Cross Street, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d. box. 2s. 9d. box contains 3 times 1s. 1½d. size.

A NEW recruit at one of our frontier posts was lately put on guard, and reported to his captain in the morning that he was abused by a fellow because he would not allow him to pass. "Well," said the Captain, "what did you do?" "Do? Why, I remonstrated with him." "And to what effect?" "Well, I don't know to what effect, but the barrel of my gun is bent."

FIRST MERCHANT: "The lady in charge of that department must be a treasure. I never saw more perfect breeding and refinement. How in the world did you get her?" **Second Merchant:** "Advertised in the *Daily Metropolis*." **F.M.:** "I advertised in that paper for a saleslady last week, and got nothing but a lot of creatures I would not have in my kitchen." **S.M.:** "Better try my plan. I advertised for a saleswoman."

JUDITH

CHAPTER IV.

DO you often have these dinner parties?"

"Twice, sometimes three times a week."

Judith and Winifred had been decorating the dinner-table; and now, resting from their labours, sat in a couple of arm-chairs, admiring the result.

The effect was good, though simple in design, the commonest pink roses massed together with no other flowers, not even their own leaves; but they looked very well in the pink glass bowls on the deeper shade of embossed pink velvet that ran along the centre of the table.

Judith was quite satisfied, and Winifred enthusiastic; declaring they had never had it so pretty before, appealing to her father to corroborate the assertion when presently he entered the room.

He agreed at once, praising their handiwork kindly; then fidgeted about, moving the muffiners, dusting the Dresden china candlesticks with his handkerchief, looking after the wine and dessert, evidently anxious that all should be "comme il faut."

He was writing out the names of the expected guests on some little china stands when Winifred, who stood behind him, gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Fourteen! Then you have asked someone in place of the Hares?"

"Your mother asked Captain Graeme last evening, and as we could not sit down thirteen, I thought I had better ask someone else; and, as I met Johnson, I thought I might as well ask him."

"And he is coming?" asked Winifred, her slow, cold tones contrasting with her father's hurried, even apologetic manner.

"Oh, yes, he said he'd come!"

"We may as well go, Judith; there is nothing more to do!" said the girl, quietly, only a slight dilating of her nostrils showing she was under the influence of some excitement.

Just as they were leaving Mrs. Sherston came in, and stood in front of the table, frowning as she surveyed it.

"Oh! this will never do!" she said, in the hard, dictatorial voice Judith had begun to know so well, and to cordially dislike.

"Why, I think it looks very nice," said her husband.

"Oh! nice! What has that to do with it? I distinctly remember that last year, when we dined at the Trevors, she had nothing but nasturtiums in amber vases on old gold velvet! She'd say at once we had copied her idea!"

"I would not mind that, so long as it looked pretty," said Judith; then bit her lips in anger at her own impulsiveness, as Mrs. Sherston turned and looked her down coldly.

"It is excessively bad style to copy people in that way. I would not do such a thing for worlds."

"If we put a little mignonette amongst it, will that do?" asked Winifred, who was beginning to look very tired.

After some discussion, Mrs. Sherston consented to be mollified by the addition of the mignonette and some rose leaves, at the last moment putting in a pink geranium here and there; while Judith looked on in silence, tacitly refusing to help.

"There, that looks much nicer! The leaves tone it down, and are a great relief. It was too pink before," said the lady, complacently. "Do not you agree with me, Miss Holt?" she added, as no one replied.

"If I had thought so I should have done it like that at first!" blurted out Judith rebelliously, while Winifred hastened to interpose, for fear her mother might take offence at her friend's outspokenness.

"But it is much nicer, of course, not to have appeared to be copying Mrs. Trevor."

She followed Judith from the room, and Mrs. Sherston's voice was quite audible to both as she said to her husband in her most aggravatingly superior manner—

"She was afraid that poor girl had a most unfortunate temper!"

At this rather one-sided view of the case Judith was half inclined to laugh, but a feeling of anger dominated the impulse of merriment, and made her throw up her head proudly.

"I shall never take any trouble about anything again!" she declared.

"What does it matter?" asked Winifred, soothingly.

"But the table looks so horrid now, so commonplace! It was only the mass of colour made those roses look well at all!"

"What does it matter? If it had been left so it would have pleased the people who are coming to-night better, I daresay; but, after all, what is it whether they are pleased or no? It is much better policy to keep mamma in a good temper."

"Nothing should have made her say I liked it!" vehemently.

"And I," declared Winifred, "would say anything for peace and quietness."

They separated then to dress for dinner.

On Judith's bed there lay a white gown she had selected on account of its coolness; but she tossed it back impatiently into a box, and drew out one of copper-coloured plush instead.

"I will wear something to impress her; she shall see I am not the raw schoolgirl she imagines me!" she said viciously to herself.

The gown was made quite plainly, and showed every line of the beautifully-moulded figure. It came up high on her shoulders, but left the neck and arms quite bare, with only some brilliantly-cut beads outlining the opening—a fashion that anyone else might have found trying, but suited Judith's style exactly. The dark hair with its metallic gleams of light was coiled round and round her head, allowing the white parting to show in front, as well as the soft, natural fringe that shaded her brow.

She looked very lovely, very queenly, as she surveyed herself before going down; and with a little thrill of excusable vanity, told herself that she need not fear even Mrs. Sherston's adverse criticism, nor the rivalry of any elderly married woman who by experience and art (not nature) had learnt to fascinate and compel the admiration which had probably been withheld from her in earlier life.

The smile which had parted her mobile lips was there still, as emerging from her room, she encountered Mrs. Sherston.

She stopped and looked her daughter's companion up and down, her eyes fixed at once by the contrast of the dark rich plush against her white neck.

"You must excuse my saying, Miss Holt, that you have made the same mistake with your dress you made with the dinner-table just now. It is very nice, but wants relief. I am not saying it is not fashionable. I daresay it is, only good taste can often rectify the errors to which even the best dressmakers are liable. Run back to your room—there is plenty of time—and tack a piece of lace into the neck and sleeves of your dress, and I am sure it will look quite pretty!"

With crimson cheeks and lids that drooping hid the anger in her eyes, Judith went back, less with the idea of obeying the suggestion—which, indeed, was meant as a command—than by going to avoid the danger of some defiant answer coming out that she might subsequently regret.

She was more irritated than the occasion would seem to demand, but had always prided

herself on her taste in such matters, and felt also that in any case she had a right to please herself. It was insufferable that this woman, whose clothes were generally made by a native tailor on the verandah, should presume to criticise what was turned out by one of the first French artistes in town.

For a long time she wavered, half resolving to defy her, and go down as she was; and then a little reflection told her it would be very foolish to lose a really good situation for such an inadequate cause.

Mrs. Sherston liked her own way, and must have it in these small matters, even at the expense of a little hurt pride. It would never do to relinquish her scheme for helping her father, and have so slight a reason to urge for doing so—only that her hard-hearted employer had insisted on her wearing a piece of lace on a gown that she—Judith—considered looked best without it.

Her good humour restored at the folly of the idea, she searched for and found a wisp of old white Mechlin, and laid it lightly under the rows of glittering beads, rather reluctantly confessing to herself that the soft lace did, after all, look more womanly, and was also more becoming. Then she went to the drawing-room.

Some dozen people were assembled when she entered, and all eyes were turned upon her, even Mrs. Sherston admitting grudgingly that she was very fair to see; indeed, she looked absolutely brilliant in her rich gown, the traces of recent excitement still visible in her heightened colour, and the somewhat steely gleam of her blue eyes.

She came half-way across the room, then stopped, remembering that she knew no one there, and a swift glance having assured her that Mrs. Sherston was engaged talking to the General's wife, and would probably not wish to be interrupted.

Not in the least embarrassed, only slightly bored at finding herself amongst strangers, who might, possibly, be as little interested in her as she in them, she stood there in an attitude of careless grace, looking—so the men unanimously decided—immeasurably above the rest of the women present: a little conscious of her superiority, perhaps, but too well-bred to show it aggressively.

She started slightly at Mr. Sherston's voice behind her.

"Mr. Johnson is to have the pleasure of taking you into dinner, Miss Holt. May I introduce him?"

Turning, she confronted the man she had seen a few days before, and liked him no better now than she had done then.

He was a man of ordinary height, well-dressed, and with manners, she was compelled to admit, not amiss. It was his face she disliked.

It was very thin and sallow, and seemed out of keeping with his figure, which was inclined to stoutness. Moreover, it had a sinister expression, the eyes being set very close together on either side of the long, attenuated nose. It was probable, in spite of his jet-black hair, which he wore rather long, as though proud of its luxuriance, he had already passed middle-age; but it was very evident that on this point he would prefer to deceive anyone he could.

Their glances met, and Judith fancied that the pupils of his dilated, as though with some intense sensation; it might be an instinctive reciprocity of dislike. With the slightest and most chilling of bows she acknowledged the introduction, allowing him to talk to her, but responding in monosyllables, and taking so little interest in the subject of his remarks that she was free to notice one of the servants coming to say something to Mrs. Sherston in a low voice—something that evidently annoyed her, and caused her, with a hurried apology to the lady to whom she had been talking, to rise and leave the room.

After a few moments' absence she returned, and in her usual shrill tones, which penetrated to the farthest corner, observed that her

daughter was too indisposed to join them; and at the same moment dinner was announced.

Only touching Mr. Johnson's coat-sleeve with her finger-tips, Judith allowed herself to be led in; but deliberately turned her face from him directly they sat down to table. She found her other neighbour very ready to engage her in conversation. He was quite a boy, with an eager way of talking that amused her, and before long she was in possession of nearly every detail of his existence. His name was Manleverer, he had joined the 14th Lanciers a year and a half ago, and he thought Mrs. Trevor one of the most charming women he had ever met.

"That is Mrs. Trevor," he explained, nodding towards the far end of the table where a small, fair, faded-looking woman, in not very pale-blue gauze, sat and conversed in a vivacious manner with the two gentlemen on either side of her.

"Oh!" ejaculated Judith, and could think of nothing else to say.

"Who is that stout gentleman beside her?" she asked, presently.

"That is the great Colonel Lea-Creagh. He's Colonel of our regiment—the cavalry, you know, and something of a character. He's awfully fond of pretty women—married women, I mean; he's afraid to go near the single ones for fear they'd marry him. He's a capital good match, you know."

The last remark was added when Judith shuddered at the idea.

"It would take a very great deal of gold to gild him, I should think," she said, disdainfully, at which young Manleverer was immeasurably amused, all the more so because Mrs. Trevor was looking very sweetly into the eyes of the gentleman in question at that moment, while sideways, with an expression of fatuous admiration on his plain, uninteresting countenance, he returned her gaze with ardour.

"He's a very great ladies' man, I assure you. You see he's got lots of money, and entertains a good deal, and gives very handsome presents, and, really, he's not a bad old soul, taking him altogether," with a spurious burst of generosity.

Then a subject was started which soon became general; and Judith, who was accustomed to society, and could talk very brilliantly when she chose, kept the conversation in her own hands while eliciting much that was amusing from others, who, without such a stimulus, might not have troubled to exert themselves.

At the farther end of the table where Mrs. Sherston was there were frequent silences, people straining their ears to hear the clear voice with its piquant sayings that were at once so original and yet so ingenuously spoken.

Only Mrs. Trevor still strove diligently to arrest the attention of the two nearest to her. With Colonel Lea-Creagh she was partially successful; but the other scarcely attempted to disguise that his interest was elsewhere.

When Judith first entered he had pronounced her in his thoughts the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and now his gaze was rivetted upon her as she leant forward talking eagerly, her whole face aglow with animation, and the light of the big crimson-shaded lamp falling athwart her eyes making them look very large and luminous.

He had seen her once before, but then the wonderful eyes were closed and her face quite pale. He wondered if she would ever know how he had carried her through the crowd, her small head lying on his shoulder quite inert, her breath fanning his cheek—he could almost feel it now, and with a quick catching of his own breath, wished the chance might come again of doing her some small service.

Mrs. Sherston addressed him, and he fell to earth again with a start, remembering many things all at once, and realising one hard fact with a sharp pang.

"We were so very disappointed the Hares could not be here to-night," his hostess was saying sweetly; and knowing perfectly well why this remark was made to him and to no other, he was yet too distrustful to turn it off as easily as he could otherwise have done, and replied that he was sorry too, with a sudden earnestness of intonation that may have misled those who heard him; though, in fact, his thoughts were very far away from the lady they discussed. Then he plunged into conversation with Mrs. Trevor, who met him quite half way, and Judith's voice being no longer audible, his attention was not again distracted.

Mr. Johnson had bided his time quietly. Having a reason for wishing to speak to his beautiful companion he was yet able to wait with patience till her conscience should prick her for her rudeness towards him, and she should wish to atone.

Women he well knew always repented the injuries they inflicted, more especially when these were received with dignity, and without complaint.

When her fan slipped off her lap on to the floor he picked it up, but without comment; and then it was the thought struck her that she had been impolite, and that without provocation, the poor man beside her being in no way accountable for her wayward likes and dislikes.

"Thank you very much," she said, sweetly. "A fan is getting less of a necessity than it was a week ago."

"You are just out from England, of course?"

"That is quite true; but why do you say 'of course'?"

"The fact must be apparent to anyone—to the least observant. Look round the table, and then into the first mirror you come across, and you will see what I mean!"

The coarseness of the flattery disgusted her, and she half-turned to Mr. Manleverer; but the General's wife had accosted him at the same moment, and prudence compelled him to appear interested in the subject she had started.

Mr. Johnson saw his advantage and pursued it.

"Yes. You have just come from England, I am sure, and from London itself I should fancy; and in Paris you have also resided. Is it not so?"

The man's eyes were fixed upon her face with a look of cunning beneath his expression of bold admiration.

Disliking him more and more, Judith was, nevertheless, impressed with his perspicacity, for it was quite true she had spent the last winter in Paris, and had been there several times before.

"How do you know that?" she asked, curiously. "Have you ever met me before?"

"I cannot claim that honour. I am cosmopolitan, and know something of the little characteristic gestures and mannerisms of most countries. It could not escape my notice that you possessed all the dignity, the hauteur, of an Englishwoman with French vivacity and grace. Pardon me if I have offended!" he added, quickly, as her lips curled scornfully; and again she turned away.

She felt lowered in her own estimation, because he had dared to praise her; though her eyes were averted she knew his gaze was on her still, and felt out of all proportion angered at the notion.

At the same time there had been something in his expression which aroused her interest, and when suddenly she remembered the sentences she had overheard between him and Mr. Sherston, she addressed him of her own accord.

"Is this your first visit to India?"

"Oh, yes! Certainly! Why do you ask?" a shifty look in his eyes she noticed, but could not understand, for surely he could have no motive in shirking the question.

"And you have just come here?" she persisted.

"I arrived from Australia about a month ago!" he returned, deliberately. "Having spent a hot season there I now come to enjoy the pleasant cold of an Indian winter!"

"But surely it was winter when you left Australia?" she interrupted, directing a sharp glance at him to see if he showed any sign of having made a mistake.

"It was getting warm then, and I desert heat," he said, calmly.

Mrs. Sherston made the signal to rise, and Mr. Johnson was first at the door, looking straight into Judith's eyes as she passed; and she thought he pressed her fingers very slightly as he gave her back the fan he still held.

Furious at the fancied impertinence, she crossed the room, her head erect, and sat a little way apart from the other ladies who had gathered round the empty grate near the fireplace, nursing her indignation in solitude.

Presently Mrs. Trevor joined her, urged to do so probably by the notion that it is best to spy out the country of the enemy, and so become aware of its strength and weaknesses. Such a girl might be a very disturbing element in their society if she chose. The question was, did she know it? A glance might have sufficed to answer this to her own dissatisfaction. No one looking at Judith in her present mood could doubt that she was conscious of her powers; and would use them ruthlessly if the fancy seized her. Yet little Mrs. Trevor was not daunted.

"How do you like what you have seen of India, Miss Holt?" she asked, pleasantly.

"I like the country, now, though I daresay I should not care for hot weather. It is the natives I cannot like."

"What, even here?" with eyebrows delicately upraised. "I thought they always showed to good advantage in the sacred precincts of a Commissioner's house."

"They are civil enough outwardly; it is a sort of repressed veiled insolence I object to, but perhaps I am rather a despot in my views. Mr. Sherston believes in equality, I argue it is impossible unless we are content to sink to their level; they could never—no, not with all the education and civilisation in the world—rise to ours."

Mrs. Trevor looked at the girl critically. It was such a strange subject for her to take so evidently to heart, and she must have noticed so much during the few days she had been here.

"Mr. Sherston is a follower of Lord Ripon, a firm believer in the wrongs and merits of the oppressed Hindoo."

Judith's eyes flashed fire.

"You must have read those columns in the 'Indian Telegraph,' headed 'Opinions of the Native Press.' They make me very wroth. The Government should not allow such—such sedition!"

Mrs. Trevor yawned slightly, and looked at the clock. A moment later, in answer to her unspoken prayer, the door of the dining-room opened, and her face brightened as Colonel Lea-Creagh and Mr. Johnson approached.

"We are discussing India," she explained.

"Ah! At present that is an interesting subject to Miss Holt; but she will weary of it terribly before long," declared Mr. Johnson.

"That is a globe-trotter's view of the matter. They are content with a cursory glance round," said Colonel Lea-Creagh, looking first at Mrs. Trevor, then at Judith, his eyes expressing utmost admiration, his full lips wreathed in a fascinating smile.

Two seats were vacant, one near the married woman, one beside the girl, and for a moment he hesitated which to take; then an uncontrollable impulse smothered prudence, and for the first time for many years he actually courted what he would have called destruction.

He sat down beside Judith, a soft fold of her gown brushed against his knee; and he was as utterly lost as though he had never railed against matrimony, never vowed enmity against it.

"I think one can see a great deal in a week," said Judith, happily unconscious of the conquest she had made.

"I agree with Miss Holt," said Johnson. "I have been in India only a month, and already I have found out that some have secured to themselves all the good things the country can afford, while others seem to experience only the ills! For ladies, the place has undoubted advantages; for the middle classes here can, if they choose, be as frivolous and as wicked as the upper ten in England!"

Judith frowned at the cynicism of the speech, and Mrs. Trevor, whom the sarcasm more nearly concerned, looked up quickly.

"Was it you by any chance who wrote an article on Anglo-Indian ladies lately?"

"I have been guilty of no such temerity," he replied.

"It seemed rather like your sentiments. The writer said we were much maligned, that we really had broader views than our sisters in England, that we were generally more pleasant, more interesting, because of our nearer knowledge of the mysteries of life and death! Oh, yes! we were good enough, kind enough, when kindness was required; but, with tragic emphasis, 'the Mrs. Langtry of India was forty, and, oh! we were so plain!'"

Everyone laughed, as much at the speaker's evident horror at the accusation as at the quoted sentiments. At the same moment Mr. Sherston joined them.

He laid his hand on Johnson's shoulder with a rather nervous gesture.

"I am trying to persuade Mr. Johnson to stay with us for a month or so, and see the country about here thoroughly," he said, speaking to them all generally, so that for a moment no one being actually addressed there was no reply.

Happening to look up, Judith saw such a mocking smile on the man's face that she shivered and grew cold with an unaccountable chill.

It was such a smile as Mephistopheles might have worn when first sure of his victim, she thought, and then was inclined to be amused at her own fanciful ideas.

The man had an unpleasant cast of countenance, and found it difficult to assume an expression of mere friendliness or gratitude.

"Are you very difficult to persuade?" smiled little Mrs. Trevor, at last.

"On the contrary, I am only too charmed to accept the invitation," was the quiet reply; and fascinated into looking in his direction, Judith saw that his face wore now the proper look of well-bred pleasure.

It must have been a fancy that he looked so diabolical before, a trick played by her own imagination.

Mrs. Trevor was asked to sing, and as Colonel Lea-Creagh, with a backward, regretful glance, led her to the piano, Mr. Manleyverer brought up someone he introduced as Captain St. Quentin. The next moment Judith found herself tête-à-tête with one of the handsomest men she had ever seen.

He had taken the empty chair beside her, but did not seem in a hurry to open the conversation; and she was equally mute, until presently a sudden thought struck her.

All the military men were in uniform, in deference to the General, who was present; and she recognised at once the Lancashire mess-dress uniform. She remembered, too, that the initials on the handkerchief she had found beneath her chin were L. St. Q., while her rescuer had been described as belonging to the English Cavalry.

"It was you who helped me the day that I arrived!" she spoke, impulsively.

"I had that honour," he replied, with a low bow.

"I am so very glad to be able to thank you, and to return your handkerchief as well. I do not know what I should have done if you had not taken me out of that dreadful place!" raising her beautiful blue eyes to his, into

whose bright optics he allowed his own to gaze for one brief moment before averting them hastily, as though conscious of a guilty action.

"It was a shame to leave you alone amongst that rabble!" he said, hastily.

"I daresay I should not have minded if I had not felt so strange, so new to everything. Mrs. Sherston was unable to meet me."

Captain St. Quentin was perfectly aware that the lady in question had had no actual engagement that evening, for he had made particular inquiries in his first indignation, and had heard of her being at the Club. But he liked Judith all the better for not complaining of the neglect she had received, and, after the manner of very young men, having discovered her to be possessed of one virtue, he was eager to credit her with every other.

"Do you know," he said, allowing his voice to sink into the impressive tone which he had hitherto reserved for one other, "I have looked out for you so often since that day. Where do you go in the afternoons?"

"Winifred and I drive out generally."

"Never to see the polo?"

She shook her head.

"Winifred is too nervous for that. She turned quite pale when I suggested it once."

"But to the Club. That is the universal resort when it grows dusk."

"We have not been there yet," doubtfully.

"But you will go soon?" he persisted, such an unconscious accent of appeal in his voice, that she flushed and was silent, feeling a little alarmed at the rapid strides they were making in their acquaintanceship.

"You will want an opportunity of returning my handkerchief?" he reminded her, audaciously.

"I can send it to you."

"No! no! don't do that. It might be lost. Give it back into my own hand, please, for fear of its misarrying."

He smiled as he spoke, and she laughed too. It seemed as if they had known each other for years.

Judith felt nearly as annoyed as when Colonel Lea-Creagh recrossed the room, and once more took his place beside her.

St. Quentin moved away, and for the rest of the evening Judith had no relief from the ponderous compliments that at once assailed her.

The attempt was made to convey the fact that a great honour was being done to her by such pointed and unusual devotion; but to this suggestion she remained absolutely blind and deaf; and was only conscious of a vexed rebellion against the chance that left her stranded thus in an otherwise empty corner of the room with so uninteresting a companion.

CHAPTER V.

So soon as the last guest departed, Judith rose to say good-night, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Sherston to discuss the success of their party.

When she turned up the lamp in her room Judith saw that the hands of her clock pointed to twelve, and she was debating whether to go to Winifred or not, when Winifred herself opened the door between their rooms, and called her to go in.

"I thought you would be asleep," said Judith, as she complied. "Are you better now?"

"Quite better. I did go to sleep, and the rest did me good. That was all I wanted, in fact."

"Then you were not very bad?"

Winifred smiled as she drew her friend towards the small fire that burned cheerily in the grate.

"No; not very bad. I had a headache, but not a worse one than I have often had before when I have sat out one of these interminable dinners!"

"Then why did not you make the effort this time? I think Mrs. Sherston was annoyed."

"Annoyed is not the word; furious expresses the state of her mind more correctly. She came in here, but fortunately I was prepared for that, and had got into bed (with all my clothes on). Had there been a few more minutes to spare, I believe she would have made me get up again!"

Judith had allowed herself to be pushed into an easy chair, and now a cup of hot soup was thrust into her hand.

"I had the fire lit here on purpose to have it ready for you. I am sure you are tired and bored to death, and I want to revive you a little, so you can tell me all about it."

She was seated in an opposite chair, looking very wide-awake after her sleep, a thin sandwich between her finger and thumb, at which by turns she bit daintily, or threw a morsel to Dandy, who was sitting up solemnly in front of her, waving his front paws vigorously in a pretty, pertinacious fashion he had proved by experience to be generally successful.

"The soup is delicious; just what I appreciate, and I will tell you as much as I can remember of what passed to-night; but first confide in me. I want to know why you would not come yourself?"

"Because—because. Well, if you wish to know the truth you were partly to blame for that. I really had a headache, and I had a reason for not wishing to go; but it was your spirit of independence fired me with emulation. I shall grow as rebellious as you soon!"

"I hope not. If I thought my example was doing you harm I would go away!" said Judith, quickly; then added, in a low voice, gazing sadly at the glowing logs of wood, her hands lying idly now in the lap of her red gown: "It is only because I have always been my own mistress that I have grown independent—unwomanly, perhaps. If I had had a mother I would have lain down my life to please her. Her slightest wish would have been my law. At least, so I think!"

"You never knew your mother?"

"She died when I was a little child, but I have a picture of her. She must have been very lovely—very gentle, and sweet!"

"And my mother!" began Winifred, bitterly; then stopped short, a feeling of loyalty forbidding her to pursue the subject.

"Perhaps," she went on presently, "one is inclined to exaggerate the claims of filial reverence if one has never been called upon to fulfil them!"

"I daresay it is so," agreed Judith, gently.

"If," falteringly, "there is less love between my parents and myself than in most cases it is my own fault entirely. There is nothing lovable in me. No wonder they do not care!"

"You must not get any such morbid idea into your head. Some people are not demonstrative—never show the emotion that they feel. Of course, they do feel it, being human beings, not sticks—nor stones. And someday there will be someone who will love you more than any, and you will go away and have a home of your own, and be as rebellious, with a little tremulous laugh, for she was more moved than she wished to show by the girl's pathetic speech, "and as happy as you choose."

Winifred shook her head sorrowfully.

"Never, now!" she murmured; then, conscious of the other's inquiring glance, though she never raised her eyes, she went on, with an effort; "There was someone once—five years ago—who cared for me; but he was in the Native Infantry, and they thought—they thought he was not good enough, and so we gave each other up. Six months afterwards he was killed at polo. I was there!" covering her face, and shuddering from head to foot at the recollection.

All the warmth of Judith's heart was on her lips and in her eyes, as swiftly traversing the short space between them she knelt down, and wound her arms round the poor girl, who seemed little more than a child, and so frail, yet had tasted such cruel sorrow.

She kissed and caressed her in silent sympathy, while Winifred was mute and tearless. "It is all so long ago," she said, wearily, at last. "And you must have been very young. You are very young now?"

"I am twenty-two," was the quiet response.

"You look seventeen!"

"That is because I am small and insignificant, and have no manner. I don't think I ever looked younger than I do now. Perhaps," with a wistful smile, Judith did not comprehend, "I shall never look any older."

"To think that you are older than I!" cried Judith, the wonder being very natural, for her own figure was taller and more formed. Her face had more character, from which it might have been judged that she had gone through more experience to mature it, while she was always gracious, winsome, and at ease.

"You have the advantage over me in everything. Tell me, Judith, how many conquests have you made to-night?"

"Must I give you the truth?" roguishly.

"Of course, what else would you dare to offer me?" falling in with the gaiety of the other's mood.

"Then," starting to her feet and adopting the attitude of a commanding officer on parade, "prepare to receive—cavalry! A colonel of cavalry; almost as big a personage as your father, I suppose, with a kingly presence, a most speaking eye, and a waist as big as this!" making generous measurement with her arms.

"Not Colonel Lea-Creagh, surely?"

"The very same. He sat with me for nearly an hour. I don't believe I appreciated the honour, then, but now that he has gone and can't come back, now I am beginning to feel proud and pleased!"

"Fancy him trusting himself with you! He is so afraid of being married, and you are so lovely, Judith, that I expect it was an unconditional surrender. Who else was there? I suppose you were not contented with one?"

"Is it likely? On the contrary, there were so many that I don't know who is worthiest to be named after Colonel Lea-Creagh."

"Then tell me who was there, and I will guess."

"The bachelors, I suppose, you mean?" said Judith. "Well, there was a Captain Graham, a Mr. Manleverer, a Captain St. Quentin—can you imagine any of those coming under my away?"

She stopped short rather suddenly, and Winifred surveyed her curiously, seeing beneath her jesting there was an undertone of earnestness. The downcast eyes betrayed nothing, but her lips were quivering, not exactly with laughter, and the flush was deepening on her cheeks.

"No," said Winifred, slowly; "it could not have been any of those. Captain Graham and Mr. Manleverer are devoted admirers of Mrs. Trevor, and, of course, it was not Captain St. Quentin. You are deceiving me. There was someone else!"

Judith's eyes were raised now in a sort of pained inquiry. She was about to speak, then restrained herself, and said instead—

"Oh, yes, there were others. There was an odious Mr. Johnson, a 'globe-trotter' they called him, who took me into dinner."

"Shall I tell you," asked Winifred, impulsively, "the chief reason why I did not go to dinner? It was the dread of meeting that man I hated him instinctively the first moment I set eyes upon him, just as you seem to hate him, too; and the worst of it is my father seems to like him, and has ordered us to be civil to him. Twice when I have been out with him lately we have met the man, and papa made an excuse to leave us together; and—and—I think he was trying to make love to me. At any rate, his manner and way of speaking was most objectionable!"

"Why did you not complain to Mr. Sherston?"

"I did. He said I was a little fool and imagined things; so now the only thing to do is

to avoid him—except that, of course, he will take no further notice of me since he has seen you!"

Judith made no reply, but her blue eyes glittered ominously, and her features hardened into an expression of resolution. Although unaccustomed to fighting her own battles she had plenty of self-confidence and faith in her untried steel; to quail before any danger would have been foreign to her nature, and this only threatened to become an annoyance.

Winifred, who had followed her own train of thought, spoke again presently—

"There is something uncanny about him altogether. I believe he will work evil to us all. The presentiment came into my mind directly I saw him, and I have never been able to rid myself of the impression since, though I have tried to persuade myself over and over again that he is only a chance visitor, that in a day or two he will leave here, and probably never come across our paths again."

"He is coming to stay in the house with us to-morrow. I heard Mr. Sherston arranging it all as he left!" blurted out Judith.

Winifred sprang to her feet, white as a ghost, her hands clasped convulsively together.

"Did I not say that he was mixed up with our fate, our fortunes?" she cried, excitedly. "I guessed it from the very first."

Judith rose too, and laid her hand with a firm, yet gentle pressure on the girl's slim waist, as she looked on her compassionately, and yet with an expression of something like rebuke.

"You are tired, dear, and only just recovered from a nervous headache which always upsets one, and I have kept you up too late. To-morrow you will laugh at such a notion, and agree with me that to a certain extent every man—it applies to women too—is master of himself and of his destiny. I should despise myself if I thought for a moment that anyone would have power to influence my fate against my will."

"But you are so strong," with eager admiration.

"And you are going to be strong, too—quite rebellious, in fact," laughing a little again at the old joke.

Winifred reached up and kissed her clingingly.

"I think you could make me whatever you chose. I love you so much that I do not mean to even try to resist your influence, in spite of what you said."

"Then I must endeavour it shall only be for good. Good-night. Sleep well, my dear!"

Smiling still, Judith passed through the door that divided their rooms, but before she had been a moment alone the smile was replaced by an expression of deepest gravity. She was herself seriously inclined to share the superstitious dread Winifred felt of their new acquaintance, and she, moreover, had some reason for her fears.

The first words she had heard him speak showed that he had met Mr. Sherston before, though both preferred to ignore that it was so; and the alip he had made during dinner had not escaped her attention.

To those who have never realised the fact by experience, it is easy to forget that the seasons in Australia are the reverse from those in the southern hemisphere, but the mistake seemed an almost impossible one to a man who had only just left the country.

She did not believe that anyone could come direct from a cold climate and deliberately speak of it as being warm. The only conclusion to which she could come was that he had not been there at all, that he had lied to her; and this being so, what purpose had it served? The man must be playing some deep game. Could it be true what Winifred had declared that his coming boded them no good? Naturally sensible though she was, Judith's mind was strongly biased to the same decision, and it was only by an effort she put the subject from her thoughts, deter-

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mining not to dwell on it again till she had gained more knowledge of the matter.

She had taken off her copper-coloured gown and thrown it aside with a rather impatient gesture. Having donned it with an idea of impressing the people she was to meet, it had so far certainly fulfilled its object, and yet she felt an unreasonable displeasure both with it and with herself.

The attraction had been exercised on two persons—each utterly unlike the other—neither of whom she could ever in sober earnest have desired to please.

Her beauty was generally a pleasure to her, but to-night she would not look at her own reflection in the glass, being out of tune with herself, indignant and distressed.

Presently, as though with intent to console, a memory stole into her heart that tinged her thoughts with a strange softness and delight. As in a dream, she gazed again into eyes as blue as her own, but possessing more warmth, more fire; and she was soothed to sleep at last by the echo of a voice that spoke the merest generalities, and yet whose every tone was a caress—a prayer.

CHAPTER VI.

The room was quite bright when Judith opened her eyes next morning. She always slept with the French windows thrown wide open, so that there was nothing but the fine grass chick to prevent the sunshine from streaming in, and flooding all the floor.

There was a slight breeze blowing, which made the golden pods of the peepul tree rustle musically, while from farther away the big well-wheel dropped on dreamily.

A scent of mignonette was swept in from a box on the verandah, and the twittering of small birds made a cheerful sound, banishing any feeling of depression there might have been on first awakening.

It is curious how, as one gradually becomes alive to sight and sound, the mind goes groping about after what materials it can discover for grief or pleasure, and how at last, as the events of the previous day recall themselves, they tinge the thoughts that slowly come to form.

Instinct is quicker than memory in most cases! You feel there is cause for anxiety or satisfaction long before you remember what has actually occurred.

So it was with Judith. Her conversation with Winifred came back to her first; then her own reasons for believing the girl's dread not to be unfounded; and these explained the gloomy forebodings that had troubled her vaguely for a while, but not for long.

So happy was her nature, and so sensitive to all brightness, that these thoughts were soon dispelled. She could take pleasure in the sunshine, and in the exhilarating idea that this day would not be as other days; that before its close she would probably have seen and spoken to Captain St. Quentin again.

Judith had rather lost her head for the nonce. She was not given to the romantic fancying, which are common to most young girls, but the circumstances of their meeting had been out of the ordinary way, and she was alone now in a strange country, with only Winifred to care for.

Had they met under the usual conditions in London society, when she was surrounded by friends and admirers, Captain St. Quentin might have made no impression; as it was, she exaggerated the aid he had rendered, and was inclined to succumb too readily to the charm of his handsome face.

Moreover, these new feelings were without any deleterious effect. She felt as though she trod on air as she walked across to the dining-room, and a song that Mrs. Trevor had played the night before rang so persistently in her head that once or twice she found herself humming it aloud.

Winifred did not always get up for breakfast, and the Commissioner had had his earlier and gone out, so that Mrs. Sherston and Judith sat down alone.

It occurred to the latter that this might be a good opportunity for eliciting more information as to Mr. Johnson's antecedents and present plans.

"The gentleman who took me in to dinner last night is what they call a 'globe-trotter,' is he not?" she began, carelessly.

"He is travelling about to see the country. He is a man of great wealth, and really very pleasant manners."

"An has only been in India a short time?"

"A month at most. He came here about ten days ago. My husband has taken rather a fancy to him, and has asked him on a long visit."

"Where was he before he came to India?"

"Somewhere on the Continent; in Paris, I believe," was the careless reply. Then more eagerly, "After all, our party was not so dull last night, as we feared it might be. Mrs. Trevor is always bright and exceedingly popular, though really quite plain! And then she sings. Not much voice, perhaps, but a great deal of taste."

Judith agreed vaguely; more so to the absence of voice than the possession of the redeeming quality. She had discovered what she wished to know, and was quite ready to discuss with Mrs. Sherston the subjects that most interested her—to wit, personalities, and the problem of social precedence.

Half-an-hour was spent in dilating on the enormity of the conduct of a lady who had arrived in the station a month ago, and had not yet called on the Commissioner's wife, though it was a matter of history she had already visited one or two other less august ladies.

"Perhaps she is shy?" suggested Judith. "That custom of the new-comer calling first must be a very trying one till you get used to it."

But this excuse was summarily rejected. The lady whose shortcomings were the subject

under discussion had been to church, to the Club, had actually been seen at the last-mentioned place talking and laughing with a small circle of acquaintances, so it was evident that she was hardened in sin, maybe even glorying in it.

Judith was glad when the calls of house-keeping required Mrs. Sherston's presence elsewhere, and she was free to speak or be silent, as she chose.

She thought she could never grow to care about these petty matters that, apparently, were so important here; and did not wonder that Winifred had become so listless and averse to society.

After luncheon they went for a drive, and Winifred put the usual careless inquiry to her companion as to where they should go.

Generally, it was answered with equal indifference; but to-day Judith remarked demurely that it would be nice to go round the Park, and afterwards to the Club.

Winifred turned round with a sudden shy smile.

"Who is it?" she asked, rallying.

"Colonel Lea-Creagh," was the laughing response; but her fingers closed tightly over the handkerchief she felt neatly folded up in her pocket.

They encountered very few people during their drive; but as they came up to the Club they found a row of carriages standing there, and several ponies waiting for their owners.

"It is band night. There will be dancing," explained Winifred.

The building was a handsome one; well-placed in spacious grounds, which, at the present moment, were rather overrun with children, and quite a crowd of their inevitable attendants—nursemaids, ayahs, and bearers, who had collected to hear the band play.

It was just growing dusk, and these were gradually dispersing as the bandmen shouldered their music-stands, and prepared to go inside.

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There were several couples strolling up and down the broad verandah, and as Judith went to the very end and looked round the corner a young man in flannels, who was speaking earnestly to a girl carrying a tennis-bat, looked round impatiently, and dropped the hand he had been holding.

"It is a great place for flirting!" observed Winifred, laconically.

"Is that why you never come?"

"No. I don't suppose anyone would want to flirt with me. Come in, and I will show you all about the place," leading the way as she spoke.

"This is the library, where Mudie sends all the old books no one in England will read. That," half drawing aside a curtain that hung over an open door, "is the ladies' reading-room. Men may go in if they like, but they are generally afraid, and, as excuse for their timidity, have christened it 'The Chamber of Horrors!'"

Judith laughed lightly, and did not think the name misplaced.

There were only two men in the room. One, speaking to a pretty married woman in spasmodic gasps, as though conscious that a great many eyes were upon him, which, indeed, there were; another, an older man, and evidently a husband, waiting to detach his wife from a group of matrons on the centre ottoman.

Some ladies were making a pretence of reading, others did so in earnest, but all with one accord raised their eyes at every fresh entrance, and no one spoke in anything but an undertone. There was a solemn, hushed silence over all.

In the hall and corridors the sexes mingled more naturally, and there was a pleasant hum of voices; now and again a ringing laugh, with perhaps an accompaniment in a manlier key.

The first person on whom Judith's eyes rested was the Bachelor Colonel of the —th Lancers.

He was the only man in a group of two or three women, all pretty, all betraying an endeavour to attract and keep his attention.

With an attempt to be impartial, he beamed on all alike, till the little expression his face could boast seemed merged in one large comprehensive smile; and as he turned his head in each different direction by turn, so that its refulgence might be shed on all alike, he resembled nothing so much as the revolving light that is used to save our ships at sea.

Serely unconscious that he could ever be the object of ridicule, Colonel Lea-Creagh talked on, or rather listened to the women as they talked, now and then throwing in a remark which, on account of its brevity, was sometimes mistaken for wit.

"He is like a Satyr among the Fauns!" said Judith, with an accent of disgust. "How can they have patience with him?"

"He is very rich and very generous. Voila tout," answered Winifred, displaying an unsuspected vein of cynicism.

Judith half turned towards her in laughing surprise, when the sight of someone—someone she had expected to see there, and should consequently have been prepared to meet—set her heart beating quickly, and made her forget everything else.

It was Captain St. Quentin, walking with a lady she had not seen before, bending his handsome head with what Judith considered rather unnecessary emprossement to catch what she was saying.

The lady was not very young, and perhaps not very beautiful, but she had that nameless air and unexplainable attraction which men find more difficult to resist than the mere soulless charms of extreme youth or perfect features.

She was exquisitely dressed, and in this a striking contrast to little Mrs. Trevor, who stood near, "gowned just anyhow," as Judith expressed it, with an expression of naive horror, while her appearance owed just a little from the aid of art.

That was her only folly, since, in these enlightened days, it would scarcely do to call it vice.

In every other respect she was a very clever woman, and managed to conceal the fact—the cleverest feat of all.

The ordinary man is generally alarmed at the mere suspicion of deep intellect in a woman; he is no longer at ease in her society, no longer light of heart and confident, since he knows her—possessed of a quality that can pierce the shallowness of his own knowledge; which, as a rule, was sufficient to pass a necessary examination—and no more.

The happy knack of repartee must always be a source of pride to its possessor; but it is questionable whether it can compensate a woman for the dread it arouses in the manly breast; and, indeed, in others of their own sex, who are less brilliantly endowed.

I am inclined to believe that powers of sarcasm should be as jealously concealed as dynamic matter by a Socialistic Freethinker!

This truth the Honourable Mrs. Hare had grasped. She never permitted a sign of her mental capabilities to ooze out, except in rare cases, where she knew it would be safe to do so, and to the outer world presented a surface so amiable as to be almost uninteresting had it not been for the wonderful fascination she seemed to exert without the slightest effort.

Many men had fallen unresisting victims to her thrall, the general opinion being that Laurence St. Quentin's was the last worse case.

His present attitude seemed to bear out that idea, as he walked by her side, and listened to everything she had to say with apparently undivided attention, though a keen observer might have noticed that every now and then he cast a sharp glance round, as though looking for someone who had not yet appeared.

Judith noticed his devoted manner, and was vaguely disturbed by it. Was it his custom to lean over every woman just as he was leaning now, and had leant last night, looking unutterable things?

Laying her hand on Winifred's arm, she said, quickly—

"This is very stupid, after all. Let us go!"

The slight stir caused by their going out made Mrs. Hare turn, and survey Judith exhaustively.

"Who is that tall—very tall—woman just gone out?"

"It is Miss Holt, who is staying with the Sherstons!" was the reply given with diplomatic absence of enthusiasm.

"Not very young, I suppose?" looking at him intently.

"Don't know, I'm sure. I am not an adept at guessing ladies' ages. If it were a pony I'd tell you at once—within a year."

Colonel Lea-Creagh had turned suddenly at the sound of Mrs. Hare's voice, and with basest ingratitude deserting the ladies who had striven so zealously to entertain him, joined her at once.

St. Quentin took the opportunity to slip away. He knew the way the two girls had gone, and thought to intercept them by taking a short cut; but they had already passed the point where he had hoped to meet them, and he did not come up until they had nearly reached their carriage.

For two or three paces only he could walk by Judith's side, and gaze at her pretty profile, as with well-simulated indifference she stared straight in front of her, his eyes never leaving her face, though he addressed his remarks to Winifred.

"It is too bad—quite too bad, Miss Sherston, that you should come only to disappear so soon as seen. I hope you will come again some day, and stay longer!"

"I scarcely ever come. It was Miss Holt wished to see the place," answered Winifred, innocently.

She was in the carriage arranging her wraps, and Laurence St. Quentin—an adept at making

opportunities—managed to whisper an emphatic "thank you" in Judith's ear, as he helped her in.

"Remember!" he said, earnestly, "we all hope to see you soon again!"

Then the carriage moved on; and, as they drove through the soft darkness, Judith allowed herself to sink into a deep silence, which at last aroused Winifred's suspicion.

"Judith!" she exclaimed, impulsively. "Is he one of the conquests you made last night?"

"He talked to me for a few moments, that is all!" glad of the dusk which concealed her foolish blushes.

"O—Oh!" was Winifred's sole comment, but so much of meaning was infused into the ejaculation that once again Judith's heart contracted with a sharp pain.

At the same moment the carriage turned into the compound gates, and was drawn up under the big portico, all alight from the glow of the hall-lamps; so she dared ask no questions then. First Winifred, then she, jumped lightly down, and went towards the drawing-room, Winifred still leading the way, so that it was she who primarily crossed the threshold, and, seeing Mr. Johnson standing on the hearthrug, started back, and would have retreated; but Judith, who was behind, and had too much pride to seem to slum the presence of any man, laid her hand upon her shoulder, and gently pushed her forward.

A little to her surprise, she found he paid scant attention to her own stiffly-apologized greeting, but was very particular in his inquiries as to Winifred's health, and most devoted in his manner during the few moments they remained there. Judith was the first to slip away, and as she went to her room to dress for dinner Mr. Sherston met her, and stopped short.

"By-the-by, Miss Holt!" he began, gravely, and rather avoiding her glance, she thought; "I hear my wife made a statement this morning at breakfast that was calculated to mislead you. She said Mr. Johnson came from the Continent, from Paris, did she not? It was a very foolish mistake. He came from Australia, from Sydney, as I believe he told you last night. I am sorry if Mrs. Sherston's words should have made you doubt his. He has been in Australia for the last year!"

"After all it was of no consequence!" said Judith.

"No, of course not; but I like to be exact in everything. He came from Sydney!"

"I see!" said Judith, rather lamely, and passed on, feeling that, in fact, everything was more puzzling than ever.

That Mr. Johnson should have told her a deliberate falsehood was less startling than that Mr. Sherston should go out of his way to back him up in it. There must be some urgent reason for the deceit, and evidently both men were equally concerned in the keeping of some secret. What could the secret be?

(To be continued next week.)
(This story commenced in No. 2076. Early numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.)

SHE ENJOINED THE CURTAIN.—A lady has a girl in her employ fresh from some region far removed from the theatre. Thinking to give the girl a good treat, and knowing that she had never seen a theatre, the lady purchased a ticket for a play in a large London house. The girl went, but returned before nine o'clock.

"What is the matter? Did you not like it?" asked the mistress. "Oh, I liked it ever so much; it's a fine painting." "But," inquired her mistress, "Why have you returned so soon? Surely you didn't see it all?" "Yes, ma'am, I did. I went in and sat down and looked at the large picture hanging up in front. People kept coming in, and pretty soon there was quite a crowd all looking at the picture. Then they took it away, and some men and women went to talking, up there where it had been, about something that didn't concern me, so I got up and came home. But I enjoyed the picture."

Facetiæ

NODD: "How did you come out of that scrape with your wife?" Todd: "As usual, I apologised for being right."

"Is he a good lawyer?" "A good lawyer! Why, say, I've known him to prove the truth of what isn't so and not half try!"

TOMDIX: "Did you ever cross the ocean?" HOJAX: "Yes; once." TOMDIX: "What were your feelings?" HOJAX: "Oh, same as usual. I wanted the earth."

Willie tried to tack the carpet.

Willie's thumb received a slaw,

Which made Willie very angry,

And he softly murmured—

"Mother, mother, bring the liniment."

"AND when you went to discharge the cook, she took it quietly?" "Quietly? Why, she went like a lamb. People in the street didn't even suspect that it was anything but an ordinary fight."

DERE JENNY: "I spose u will feel bad to no I am not going to marry u anny more, but I don't care, we are so stingy. And Freddy gives me chocolate so we are engaged sinse yesterday. —Yures not anny more, Maggie."

KATCKEN: "Gawdoken says he must cut down expenses. Can't afford to support a wife and five children and keep an automobile going any longer." Bocker: "Can't he get some of his friends to adopt the children?"

"WHAT is his status in this community, if I may ask?" "He ain't got none that I ever heard on. He run a grocery for a while down to the Corners, but he ever had any status there 'twan't kep' out in sight where anybody could see it."

"Do you remember Miss May, the girl who had such a bad disposition? Well, she is married." "Indeed! Who is the lucky man?" "Fred." "Why, he is the one she discarded?" "Just so! That is why I say he is lucky."

AUNTIE (finding Jackie sobbing in a corner): "Why, Jackie, what has happened to make you feel so badly this morning?" Jackie: "M—me n—ised some jelly." Auntie: "Ho, ho! I see. And her suspicions fell upon you, eh?" Jackie: "No, auntie; it was her slipper."

"THERE is one thing I like about your husband—he never hurries you when getting ready for a walk." "Very little credit is due to him for that, my dear. Whenever I see that I am not likely to be ready in time I simply hide his hat or his gloves out of the way until I have finished dressing."

ONCE in four years: "No, Miss Smith," he said, and he said it gently, but oh, so firmly, "it can never, never be. While I am sensible of the high honour you do me, and will always be a brother to you—" "Chestnut," murmured Miss Smith; and George Sampson went out into the night.

"WHEN it comes to marriage, I wouldn't give a thought to how much the man I love is making," remarked the dreamy-eyed girl. "Neither would I," answered the practical damsel. "What would primarily interest me would be how much he had already made. There's no use taking chances."

THEY were two wretches of men, who met in the seclusion of their club. "What are the three quickest modes of communication?" queried one. "Telegraph, telephone, and cablegram." "No; wrong in the last one." "Well, what are they?" "Telegraph, telephone, and—tell a woman."

THERE are many kinds of celebrity. When Haydon, the painter, visited Stratford, he held forth about Shakespeare to some rustics he met in a wayside inn. They told him that Stratford then contained "another wonderful fellow, one John Cooper." "Why, what has he done?" "Why, sur, I'll tell 'ee. He's lived ninety years in this here town, man and boy, and never had the toothache!"

LA MONT: "There goes a man who carried everything before him." La Moyné: "You don't say so?" La Mont: "Yes; he's a street cleaner."

If you wish to ascertain if a dog is a thoroughbred or a cur, kick him. If he proves to be a well-bred, self-respecting dog, you will need a new pair of trousers."

WIFE: "You don't seem to enjoy the dinner, dear. What's the matter?" Husband: "I was wondering if there weren't some typographical errors in that cookbook of yours."

AN orator said: "There is not a man, woman, or child in this house who has arrived at the age of fifty years, but has felt this truth thundering through their minds for centuries."

"DID you make a good impression, Annette?" asked her mother. "Well, rather," returned Annette. "He tried to kiss me, and I left the print of ten pink finger-nails right along his two cheeks."

"SORRY, old man, but I learned to-day that her mother objects to you!" "Good! from what I know of human nature, that will pre-empt both the girl and her father in my favour. I'm a lucky dog."

"How did your banquet go off, Bank-lark!" "Not as well as it might, you know. The toastmaster called on a gentleman who had lost an arm and a leg to answer to the toast, 'Our absent members.'"

SON: "But accidents will happen, father, in the best-regulated families." Father (angrily): "That may be, sir, but I would have you to understand that mine is not one of the best-regulated families."

TEMPERANCE LADY: "My friend, if you don't want whisky to get the best of you, you must get the best of whisky." Promising Subject: "I do, mum, when I can; but when a feller's only got twopence—"

CHAWLKS: "Ya'as; when I was a boy, you know I was kicked by a mule and had my brains dashed out, and the doctor—"

MAUD: "Sewed up the scalp without putting them back. How funny. Aw, aw!"

If there is anything in this world more anxious than the look on the face of the bachelor who has been beguiled into holding a baby unwares, it is the look on the face of the baby's mother eagerly watching him while he does it.

NERVOUS GUEST (on ninth floor of hotel): "Ah, porter, in case of fire, is it easy for me to get out?" Porter: "Oh, yes, sir. Take that flight of stairs at the end of the corridor." Nervous Guest: "Where do they lead to?" Porter: "The roof, sir."

MISTRESS (angrily): "Bridget! What do you mean by listening outside the door?" "Shure, mum, Oi can't hip ahtoppin' to listen when Oi hear yer beautiful voice; it's loike music, especially thim high notes whin ye're blowin' up the master!"

"WILL you give me the next waltz, Miss Long?" "I wonder how you can ask it? Didn't you make some jocular remark this evening about my being so tall?" "I only alluded to you as 'sweetness long drawn out.'"

FORCED INTO IT.—"Was it a premeditated elopement?" "Oh, no. They went driving in a buckboard, and Chappie couldn't turn it round, so, rather than have all the old women on the place gossiping because they came in after midnight, they drove on and got married."

FASHIONABLE RECTOR (to little girl): "So you love to go to church, Florence, and be a good little girl?" Flossie: "Yes, indeed, Mr. Whitechoker." Rector: "Do you know many of the little girls who belong to the church?" Flossie: "No, sir; not very many. I only care to know those who sit in the middle aisle."

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DOCTOR BIGHILL: "You may thank your stars, sir, that physicians in these days don't bleed patients afflicted with your malady as they used to." Patient (dubiously): "I'm not so sure that they don't, doctor."

So witty a compliment is rarely met with as that of Sydney Smith's to his friends, Mrs. Tighe and Mrs. Cuffe: "Ah, there you are!—the cuff that every one would be glad to wear, and the tie that no one would loose."

"WHAT is your employment?" asked his Worship of a prisoner arraigned for vagrancy, the other day. "Walking, sir." "Where do you walk?" "Well, that's according to which way the policeman is coming from."

OMAHA MAN: "Let me see! Mr. Surepop is from your section, isn't he?" Colorado Man: "Yes; lived there for years." "He seems to be a remarkably fine man." "Hasn't an enemy in the world." "I should suppose not." "No; they're all dead."

"WHATEVER have you done with that lovely little dog you used to have?" asked Miss De Lancy. "Why, my dear," was the confidential reply, "I had to exchange him at the dog fanciers. He was a good summer pet, but he didn't match at all with my new seal-skin jacket."

"WHAT's the matter there, Alice? Don't your shoes fit?" "No, papa; they don't fit me at all," replied the little one; and then she enumerated all the faults of the shoes in set terms, and reached the climax thus: "Why, they don't even squeak when I go out for a walk!"

Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

ENQUIRER.—The use of amulets or charms is no longer common, although some persons still wear them. In ancient times they were generally worn. The caul is still worn as an amulet by seafaring people, who believe that a child's caul will preserve a ship and crew from being lost at sea. Sailors, however, are very superstitious and imaginative owing to their peculiar life and surroundings.

C. BATES.—1. Shaving will render the beard stronger, and also promote its growth, but we know of no other means of hastening its appearance. 2. If your means will allow of the indulgence in the luxury of a wife, make haste to marry "the loveliest girl in the world," as you so flatteringly describe your ladylove. Otherwise, wait until a sufficient capital has been accumulated to warrant the venture.

JOR.—Grey hairs can never be restored to their original hue, even though dyes claiming to produce such a result be used with the most persistent regularity. Keep the scalp clear of dandruff, avoid excitement, and lead an easy, comfortable life, putting all cares in the background, and take life as you find it. Severe headaches and neuralgia often cause the hair to lose its colour; if you are afflicted with either of these troubles, endeavour to overcome them with the help of your family physician.

PRUDENCE.—There is much to be overlooked and forgiven in every relation of life, and in none is there greater reason to be charitable, tolerant, and forgiving than in the marriage relation. If your husband is neglectful, cross, and dissipated, you lot is hard to bear; but it is best for you to bear it and trust to the influence of home, family, and religion than to take any desperate step or to seek a separation. So long as there is hope and your life is endurable try to win your husband to better ways. Your little children will help you to reclaim their father.

BOB.—The horse-shoe should be placed with the toe uppermost. There is no significance in these old superstitions. It makes no difference whatever whether you pluck a four-leaved clover or not; the lack is supposed to be indicated by finding it. History is the best reading for the young. Read history and travels. I do not know of any place where free instruction in music is given except in the public schools.

SONNIE.—South American States are not as favourable for business as the United States. A young man with a little capital can do better in any thriving western town or city where he understands the people and the language than he can in a strange country where he has to deal with a people who are foreign to him in their language, race, manners, customs and tastes. Unless you know a little Spanish and have favourable offers, I would not advise you to go to South America.

OYSTER.—The shaking that you complain of is probably the result of nervousness and timidity, and does not require medical treatment so much as the support and encouragement of your friends when in company. Try to be easy and composed, and to think of others and not of yourself. Do not be worried about the impression you are making, but simply try to be unconscious and agreeable. Often a cup of tea, especially hot beef-tea, will help you before going into company.

TIN.—I do not agree with my correspondent's "learned and popular" physician. Were pork poisonous, tens of thousands of dead, slain by its venom, would be (to speak metaphorically) holding up their skeleton fingers in warning against it. There may be too much pork for health eaten by some people, as it is said that "too much pork for a shilling" is sometimes dealt out by careless butchers; but I think that my correspondent may enjoy his bacon and eggs without fear of the coroner.

PATRICIA.—Fur for winter wear is in good taste. It does not matter whether you are in mourning or not, as fur is a protection against the cold weather, and almost absolutely required in northern climates, and delicate women who possess fur-lined garments or sealskin overgarments should wear them. Inexpensive furs are in perfect taste. Dark sealskin is preferable. A jacket of sealskin is one of the most useful as it is one of the most becoming over-garments that a young woman can wear in cold weather.

CALEB BROWN.—There is nothing which you can use that will expedite the growth of your beard. You will have to trust entirely to nature for the development of that masculine adornment. Some young men have heavy beards before they arrive at the age of twenty-one, and some men never have much beard. Whether a man is fit for matrimony or not at the age of twenty-one depends on his character and his intelligence, and also, to some degree, on his circumstances. If he has any doubt on the subject himself, he should give single blessedness the benefit of the doubt, and wait till he sees his way clear before he gets married.

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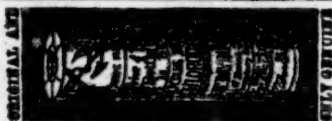
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